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The Relation of William Hazlitt
to Jean Jacques Rousseau

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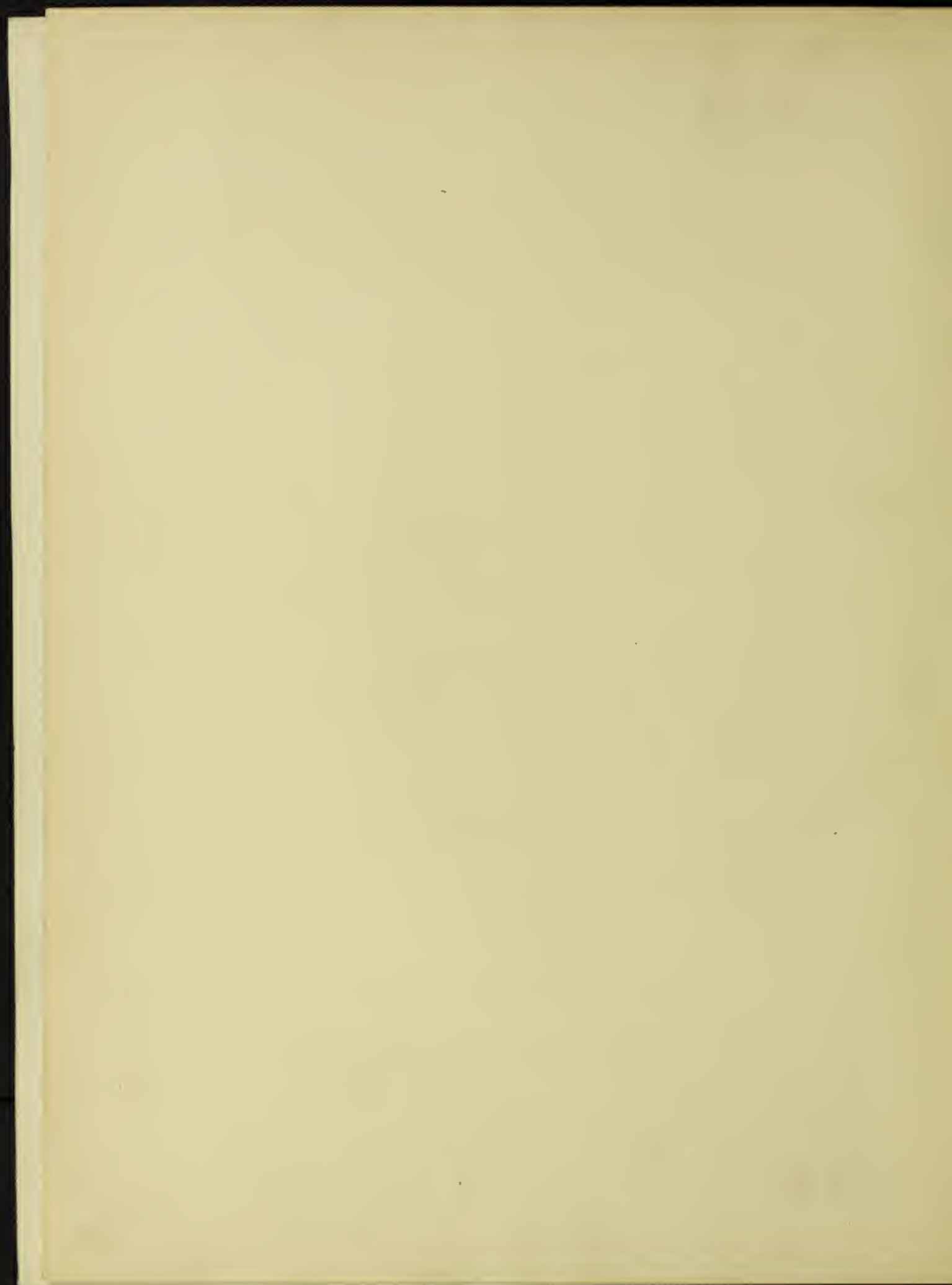
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THE RELATION OF WILLIAM HAZLITT
TO JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

BY

J. ALLAN NEVINS

THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS

IN

ENGLISH

COLLEGE OF LITERATURE AND ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

J. Allen Nevins

ENTITLED William Hazlitt and Jean Jacques Rousseau

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Bachelor of Arts

Stewart Sherman

Instructor in Charge

APPROVED:

R. W. Alden

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF

English

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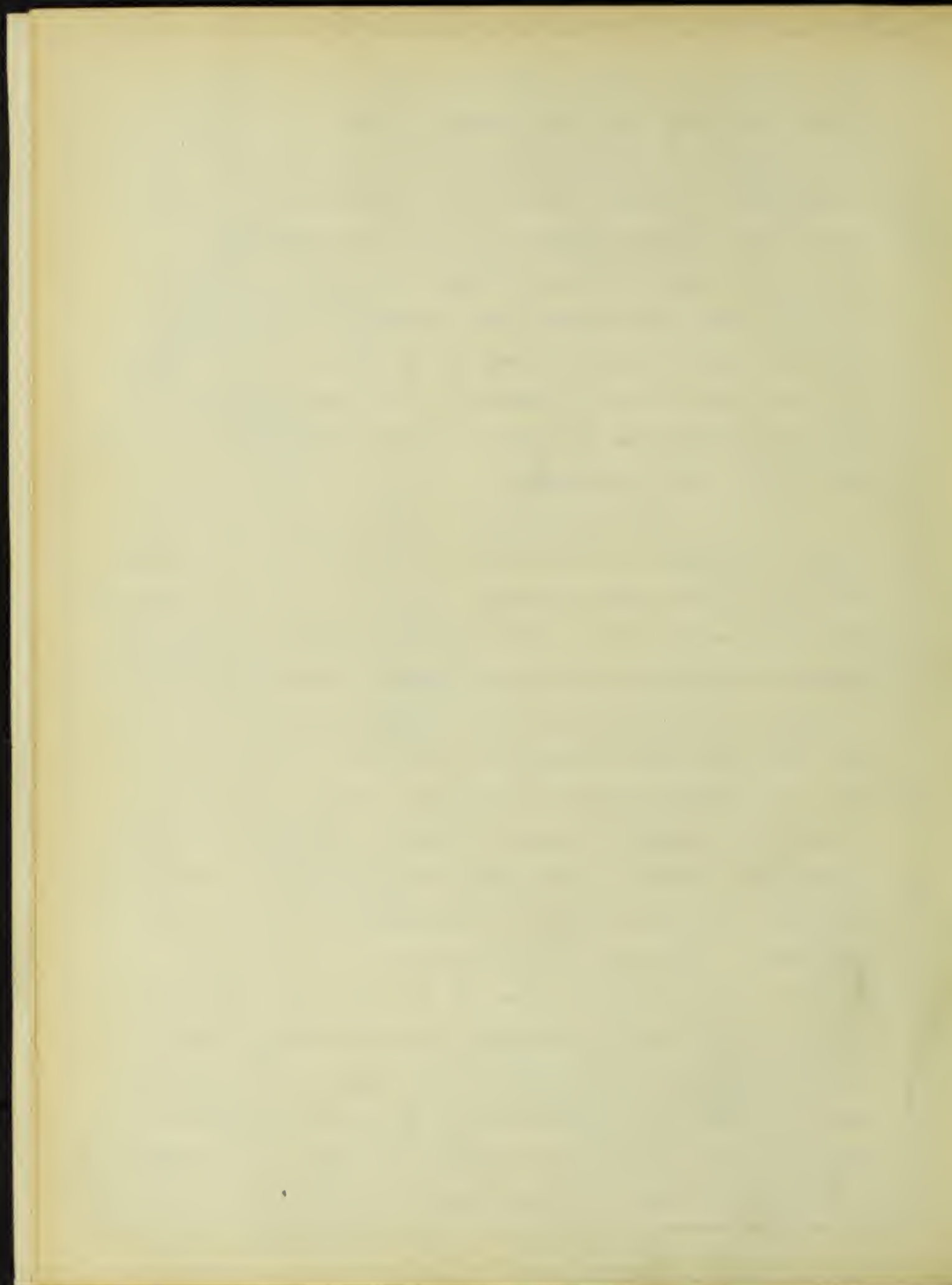
Chapter 1: Introductory

There is one single passage in Hazlitt's works in which we can hear beating with stethoscopic distinctness the most intense and unfaltering of all those English hearts which the events of revolutionary Europe awoke to passion and aspiration twenty years after Rousseau's death. Its words bespeak at once the glorious force with which that vision of a delivered humanity first possessed him, and the tenacity with which his soul cleaved unto it through life, while its expression delivers to us the main factors in a personality capable of such enthusiasm and devotion. He is traveling, in 1825, through the France which he had not seen since the boyhood days of his studies in art. "The first thing I did when I got to Paris," he says, "was to go to the Louvre. It was indeed 'first and last and midst in my thoughts. Well might it be so, for it had never been absent from them for twenty years. I had gazed myself almost blind in looking at the precious works of art it then contained—should I not weep myself blind on finding them gone, and with them gone all that I had once believed and hoped of humankind? He who had collected them, and 'worn them as a rich jewel in his iron crown,' was dead, a captive and vanquished; and with him all we who remained were 'thrown into the pit', and wore round our necks the collar of servitude, and on our foreheads the brand, and in our flesh and in our souls the stain of thralldom and of the born slaves of Kings. Thou sacred shrine of God-like magnificence, must not my heart fail and my



feet stumble as I approach thee! For here still linger the broken remains and the faded splendor of that proud monument of the triumphs of art and the majesty of man's nature over the mock-majesty of thrones! Here Genius and Fame dwell together, and that old gallery points to the long, dim perspective of waning years, and the shadow of Glory and of Liberty is seen afar off. Never for a moment have I swerved from thee, or from the cause of which thou wert the pledge and crown!" None but a man whose hatred of inequality and tyranny sprang from the same inner fountain as his love of beauty and harmony in art could have written such a paragraph.

Hazlitt's mind shines through his writings—if not, alas, through the deeds of his life—as one distinguished by the depth and fervor of its moral sentiment. In him is joined the impulsive emotionalism—the feeling of 'immortality in youth' which he describes so well—and the aesthetic responsiveness to all the 'treasures of time and Nature' that made his personality unique—that made him almost an Elizabethan born into a materialistic time. It was this bright and intuitive sympathy for whatever object met his eyes, or subject his brain, commingled with the romantic enthusiasm that, even as it permitted him to enter in reflective mood upon any topic, yet gradually led him to an inspired and rhetorical pitch, which made him the greatest occasional essayist of his time. It was this which made him in his critical work so peculiarly a personal force; which distinguishes him from the Arnold or St. Beuve of intellectual mask by an ego which animates every line and every paragraph, and which makes us feel that his hand is in ours and his eye, 'fired by a simple and unaffected desire to please,' bent upon



ours. It was this which made of a powerful journalist, not an impassioned patriot, but an impassioned cosmopolite in the cause of humanity and liberty. It was this which made of a man of the world one who loved nature as simply as a poet, and who turned back daily to the fresh springs of childish remembrances for refreshment. He was a sturdy Saxon soul into which a ministerial ancestry and a half-dozen very measurable forces of education and environment had deeply implanted the not essentially Saxon traits of idealism and sentimentalism. He was one of those who 'live in the dream of their own existence and see all things by the light of their own minds; who walk by faith and hope; to whom the guiding star of their youth still shines from afar, and into whom the spirit of the world has not entered.' His very defects of character were of the pathetic sort which arise from the inclusion of such feminine and mercurial fibers in a nature always restless and often thrown near the entrance of dangerous paths. Such fibers enable us to understand how his strong reason and his common sense, which never erred when they found expression through his pen, could wander so sadly in some passages of his life, just as ^{they} ~~it~~ explaining how that same literary expression, so admirably full of mental force, gained its completest rhetorical power and all its vivifying warmth and color from his sensibilities. He was a compound of intellect and passion; the strength of what he did expounds his intellect, his imbuing motive in it his passion.

It was inevitable that one of the minds with which Hazlitt should feel the most of those electric points of psychic contact which he was able to establish with any genius whom he read and of whom he wrote was Rousseau's, - Rousseau, who as the



greatest sentimentalist of his time and the avowed enemy of the established order "spoke what every man felt, and in whose pen the beatings of the human heart found their echo." As one of the inspiring forces of the French Revolution, into the active moral vortex of which the feelings of Hazlitt were caught, Rousseau stands out most obviously as emperor of that domain of revolutionary spirit in which Hazlitt was one of the most intrepid and active of English workers. Below and behind this lie many deeper affinities between the two men. References to Rousseau, which tell of impulses that his thought has given the younger writer, lie thickly sown over Hazlitt's pages, while more than once he openly avows their kinship. It would be idle, of course, to attempt to minimize the many and immense differences between them. Rousseau was a philosopher, Hazlitt a journalist; the one was a speculative thinker, and often therefore an unsound one, while the other applied his theories to existing conditions, and applied them with force and accuracy. Rousseau was the arch-prophet of all naturalism, describing—mainly as a result of his quarrel with the artificial institutions and distinctions of society—alluring scenes of pastoral simplicity and savage life, where the primitive man "wandered forever under the shade of magnificent forests or beside mighty rivers"; whereas Hazlitt, for all his unquenchable love of nature, balked sharply at the age of acorns and pig-nuts, in which "a horde of wandering savages housed in thickets, and lived on dewberries, shell-fish, and crabapples," and turned away as definitely from naturalism in education, in government, in everything to which Rousseau had attempted its tentative application.



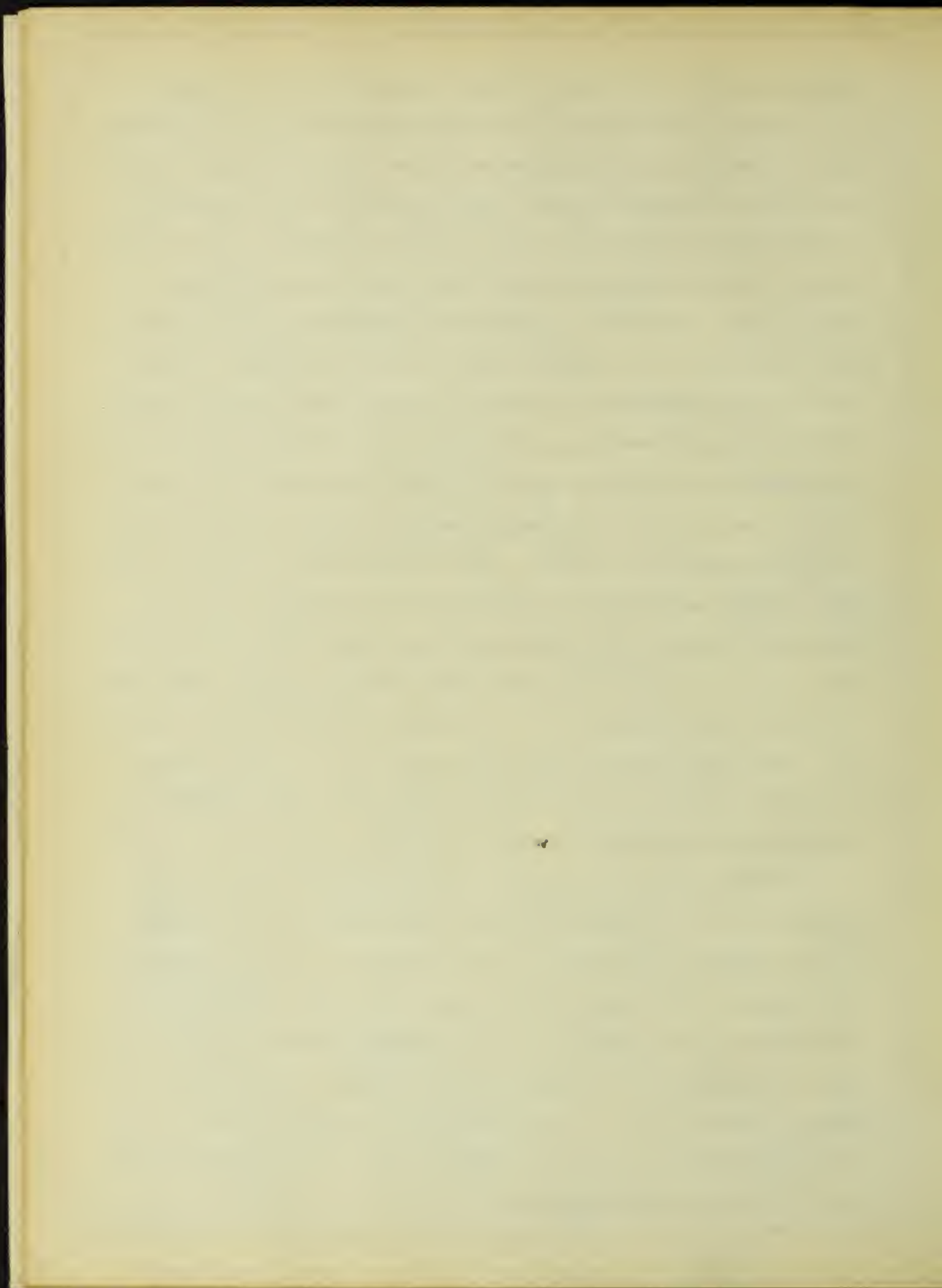
Rousseau was a wilful egotist in a sense in which Hazlitt never was, for his impressionability and his consciousness of his own personality were often morbid, and were implanted in no such soil of lusty common-sense as Hazlitt's acute sensibility. He was a sentimentalist in the objectionable sense, in his erotic, hysterical, and introspective qualities; Hazlitt's sentimentalism for the most part bloomed more healthily. In that fine essay on the character of Rousseau in which occasional enthusiastic passages betray his deep community of spirit, Hazlitt has left a clear estimate of Rousseau's shortcomings as they jarred against his sturdy sense of the practical. "He created nothing, he demonstrated nothing; his speculations are the obvious exaggerations of a mind giving a loose to habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes." If we wished, we might follow the ramifications of these contrasts into hundreds of finely-etched details; but it is the existence of definite parallels, not of differences, that we wish to prove.

"There are some teachers", says Morley, "whose distinction is neither correct thought, nor an eye for the exigencies of practical organization, but simply a power of feeling, bringing with it the indefinable gift of touching many hearts with love of virtue and the things of the spirit. Christian organization is Paul's, Luther's, Calvin's, but the spiritual life of the west during all these generations has burnt with the pure flame first lighted by the sublime mystic of ^{the} Galilean hills." Compare for a moment the phrase 'indefinable gift of touching many hearts with love of virtue and the things of the spirit' with a sentence in which Hazlitt speaks of Rousseau;--"It was he who brought the feeling of irreconcilable enmity to rank and privilege, above



humanity, home to the bosom of every man—identified it with all the pride of intellect and the deepest yearnings of the human heart. "Rousseau was that modern *counterpart* of the 'sublime mystic' who kindled the revolutionary flame which after the destruction of the Bastille overran and left in ashes all Europe; and even the critical instinct that could see that back of his strongest doctrines lay the works of Hobbes and Montesquien, and that the most practical of his theories were far from original, realized that it was nevertheless he who had supplied the exploding spark. "He owed the power which he exercised over all Europe to the force and intensity of his feelings." It would be possible to regard Hazlitt's relations to Rousseau in much the same light as one of the later apostle's to Christ. He was his avowed disciple, even unto literary martyrdom; he represented the attempt of an age beginning to take in the dazzling light of the ideal doctrine to apply it and to knit it into the social fabric; he was consciously a soldier in the vanguard of a new army, marching toward a new east. But to say merely that he was this is not to say enough, for it would be to take into account only one common facet of natures which in reality have many.

In Hazlitt's loyal adherence to the growing institutions represented by the general European revolt against the Divine Right and Special Privilege, he knew himself to be the apostle of what a master had taught. It is easy, however, to make too much of this chief manifestation of French influence, for it alone was an issue splendid enough to awaken the most intense powers of Hazlitt's genius, and it alone produced a marked impression upon the world's affairs. These two writers had a deeper fraternalism than that arising from the fact that one was interested in the

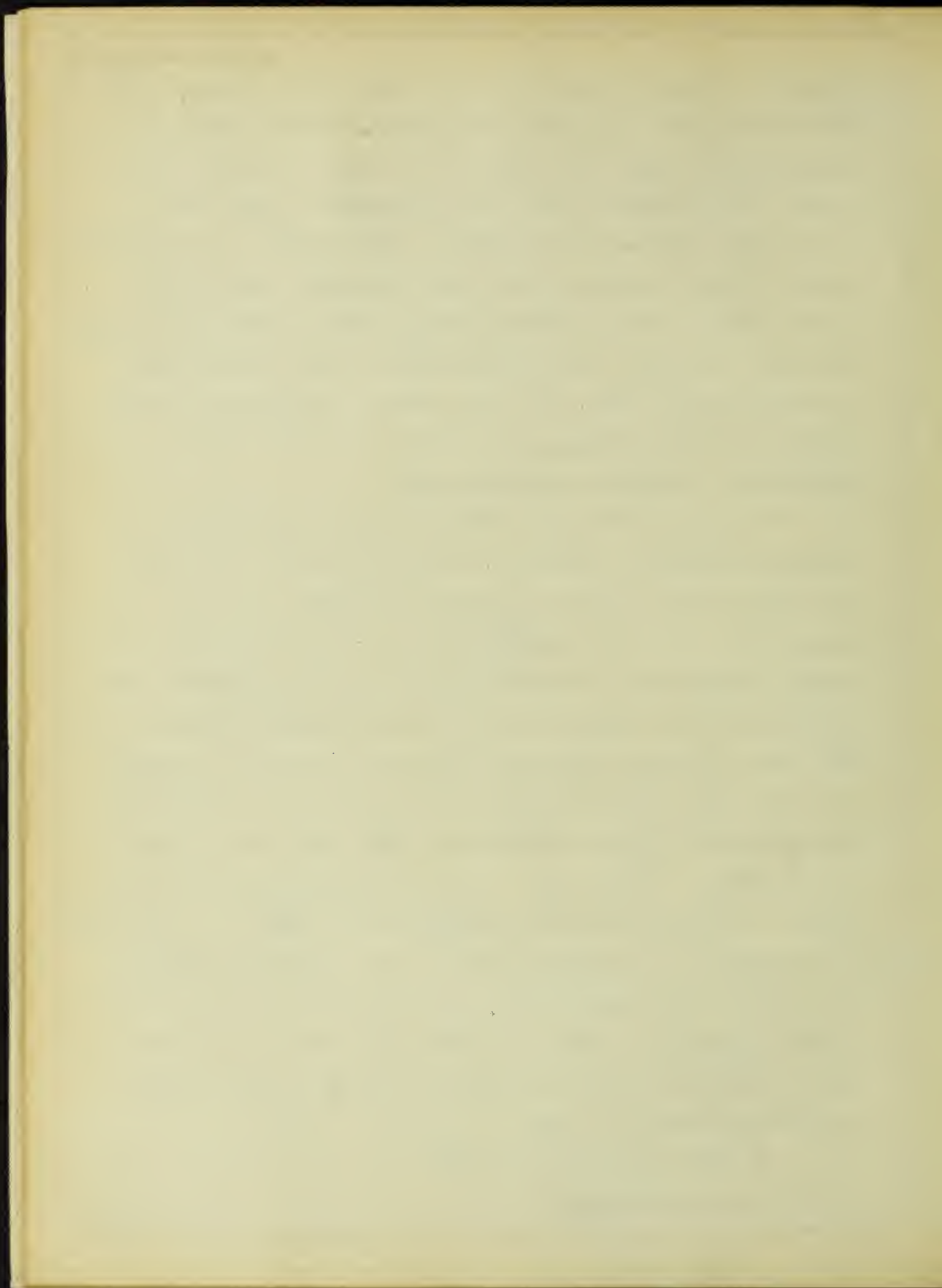


of chained humanity

incipient struggles, the other in the most violent spasms, from the same motives of democracy and justice. The same deep psychological principle that with some differences underlay the temper of both upon this point was productive of many other similarities upon many other points. The attitudes of the two men toward religion, toward nature, toward idealism, toward war, toward liberty, toward cosmopolitanism, were the same, and in many instances the younger shows unmistakeable signs of having been influenced by the elder. The fact that the personality of each glows so intimately through his writings makes the task of tracing this influence peculiarly easy.

From his youthful years Hazlitt was an attentive and enthusiastic reader of Rousseau. He was in general a man of few books: Milton, Fielding, Cervantes, Rousseau, and the Elizabethans, with the Augustans and his contemporaries for occasional excursions, sufficed him, and he read and reread them. In 1797, upon his acquaintance with Joseph Fawcett, he wrote that "the works of Sterne, Fielding, Richardson, Cervantes, Rousseau, and Godwin were the usual subjects of our discourses." He has told us how the feelings of Rousseau wove themselves into his youthful soul. "I am never tired of the Confessions," he says, "for it everywhere presents me with pictures which I can fancy to be counterparts of my own existence. The innumerable passages of this sort crowd into my mind with recollections which I do not choose to express. I spent two whole years reading this and the New Eloise, and (gentle reader, it was when I was young) in shedding tears over them—

As fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gums.'



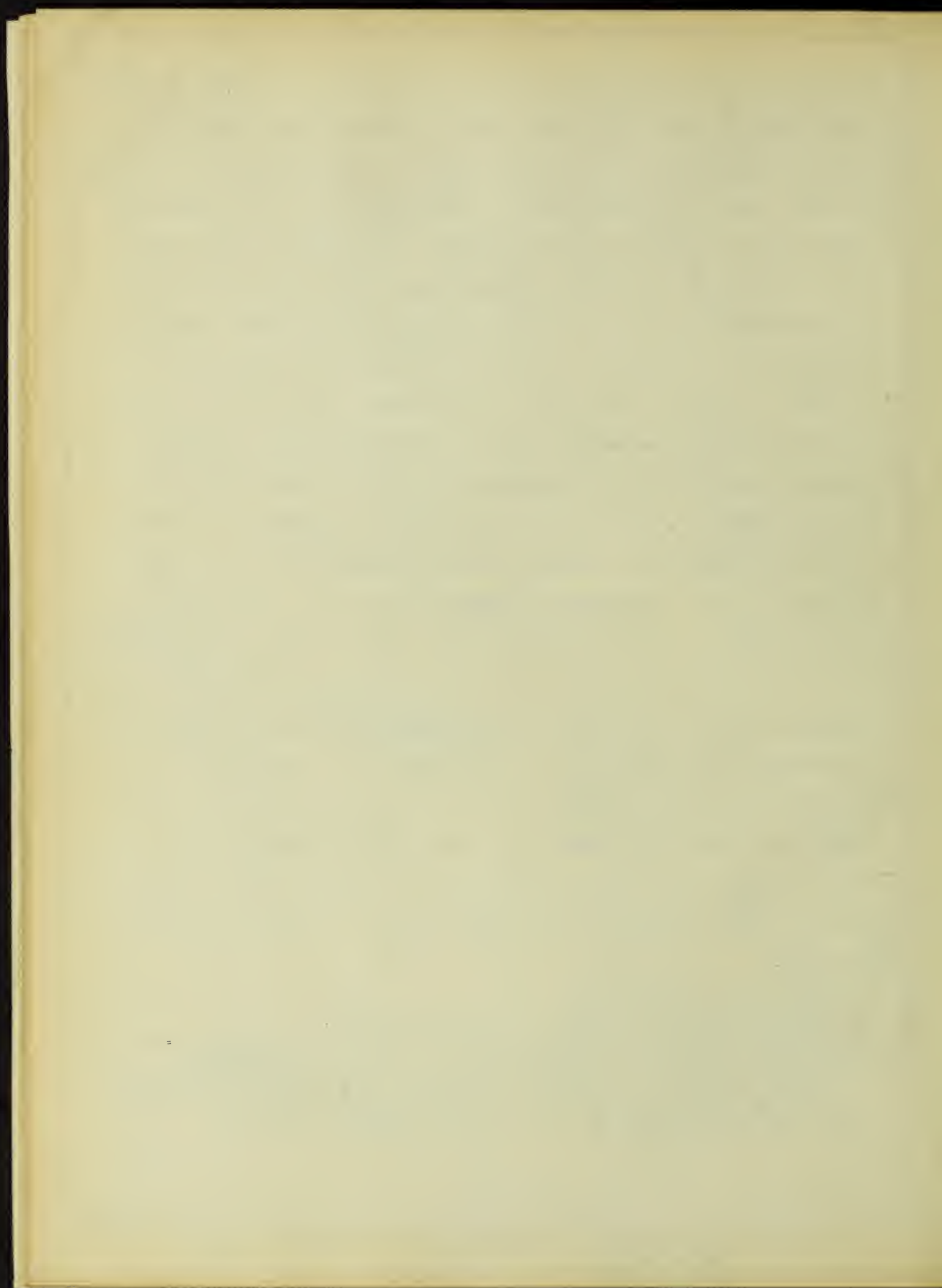
They were the happiest years of my life; sweet is the dew of their memory and pleasant the balm of their recollection! There are, indeed, impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface." In after years his remembrances of Rousseau and of his youth were inextricably mingled. In his tenderest panegyric of the past—"that past which is as much a bona fide, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life as the future can be"¹--he adverts instinctively for illustrations of its power to Wordsworth's 'the hour of glory in the grass, of splendor in the flower', and to the impressive sentence with which Rousseau opens his tenth and last reverie,—"Il y a aujourd'hui, jour de Paques fleuris cinquante ans*--". The one is intrinsically poetry; the other is poetry to Hazlitt only because it has been associated with the sweetest and most sentimental images in his mind. Rousseau's writings seem to have come home to his bosom and his business with peculiar force. "No other writer", he says, "has the power of representing an action as if it had occurred to ourselves."² Nothing less than a kinship in temperament could have made this seem true to him; and indeed, he admitted to Northcote that "before we can take a writer entirely to our hearts, he must be another self; it was this which gave such an effect to Rousseau's writings."

1. The Past and Future.

2. The Principles of Human Action, page 410.

*--Both this quotation from the final reverie, and the one from Othello immediately preceding it, exhibit the frequent looseness of Hazlitt's memory in quoting. The passages should be

"Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees, Their medicinous gum", and Il ya aujourd'hui, jour des Paques Fleuries"--



When Hazlitt¹ travels through France he is reminded at every turn of the inspired sentimentalist and reformer. In the Louvre he thinks of him and of Napoleon; at Lake Geneva he gazes out over "the solemnity and danger of the stormy waters", but his eye constantly reverts to one little dark speck, the isle of St. Pierre," (where Rousseau had taken refuge for a few months from his sorrows and his persecutions), with a more intense interest than all the rest; "for the widest prospects are trivial to the deep recesses of the human heart, and its anxious beatings are far more audible than the torrents roar."¹ At bookstalls his eyes gloat upon the long lemon-colored sets of his œuvres as he thinks of the ready dissemination which his ideas may find. "Here is the Hôtel de Notre Dame," he exclaims at Annecy,¹ "where is shown you the inn where Rousseau stopped on his way to Paris, when he went to overturn the French Monarchy by the force of his style. I thought of him as we came down the mountain, with his gold-laced hat, and his jet d'eau playing. If they could but have known who was coming—" In ^a writer from whose pen quotations flowed in profusion, and who used them not as a pedantic or precieuse scribbler would, but as the happiest means of phrasing a thought, Rousseau is honored only less than Milton, Shakespear, Spenser, and the Bible. Hazlitt quotes "this loosest of thinkers in his metaphysical essays as an authority; he quotes him in his informal essays as an impulse to his own sentiments; he makes of his principles a veritable arsenal in political essays that far transcend, in practicality, anything Rousseau ever wrote; and in even an economic treatise like the "Reply to Malthus" he is ready to appeal to "that warming voice that once cried aloud;—" *Mesens qui vous plaignez sans*

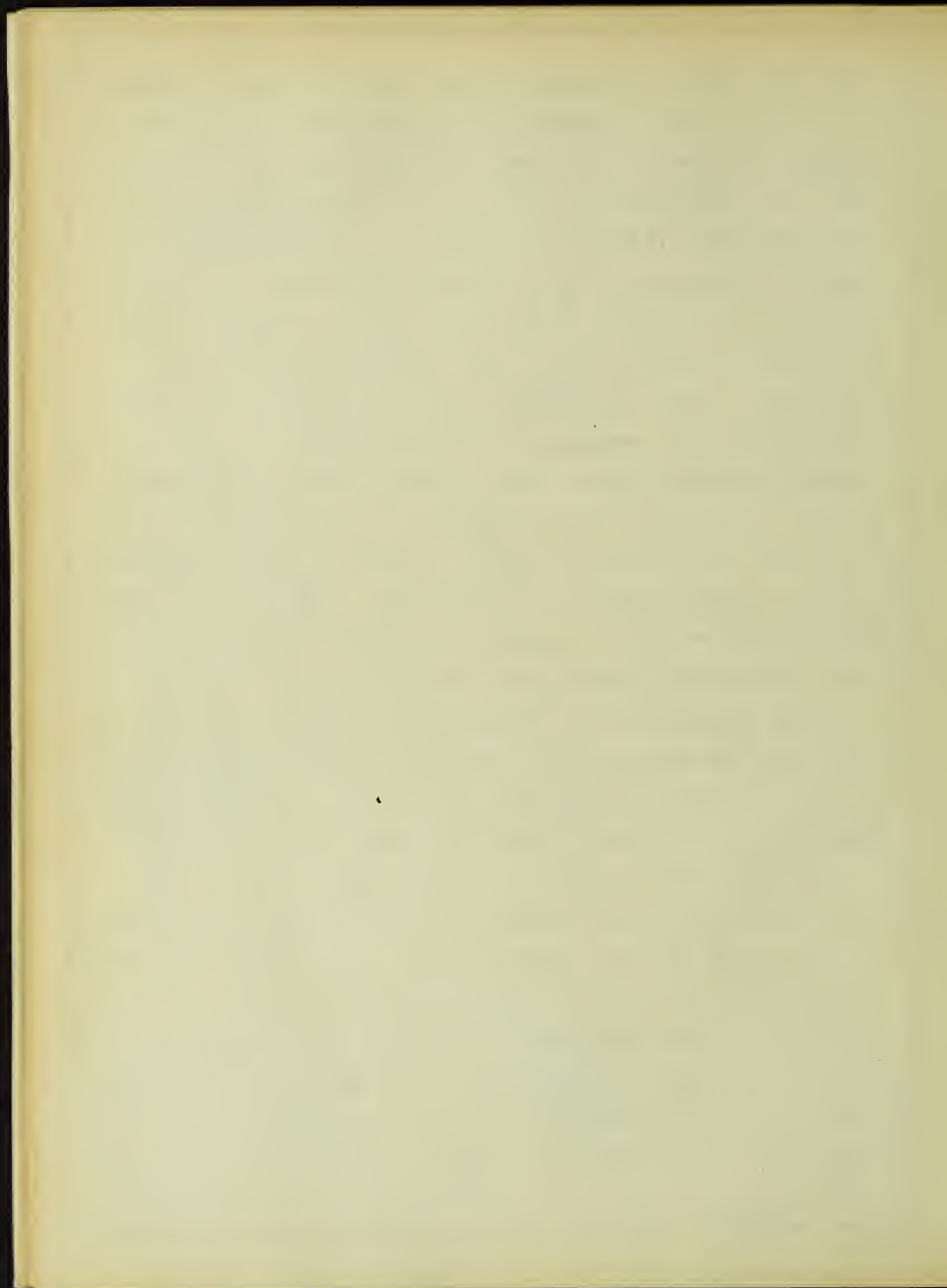
1. A Journey Through France and Italy.



cesse de la nature, apprenez que tous vos maux viennent de vous."

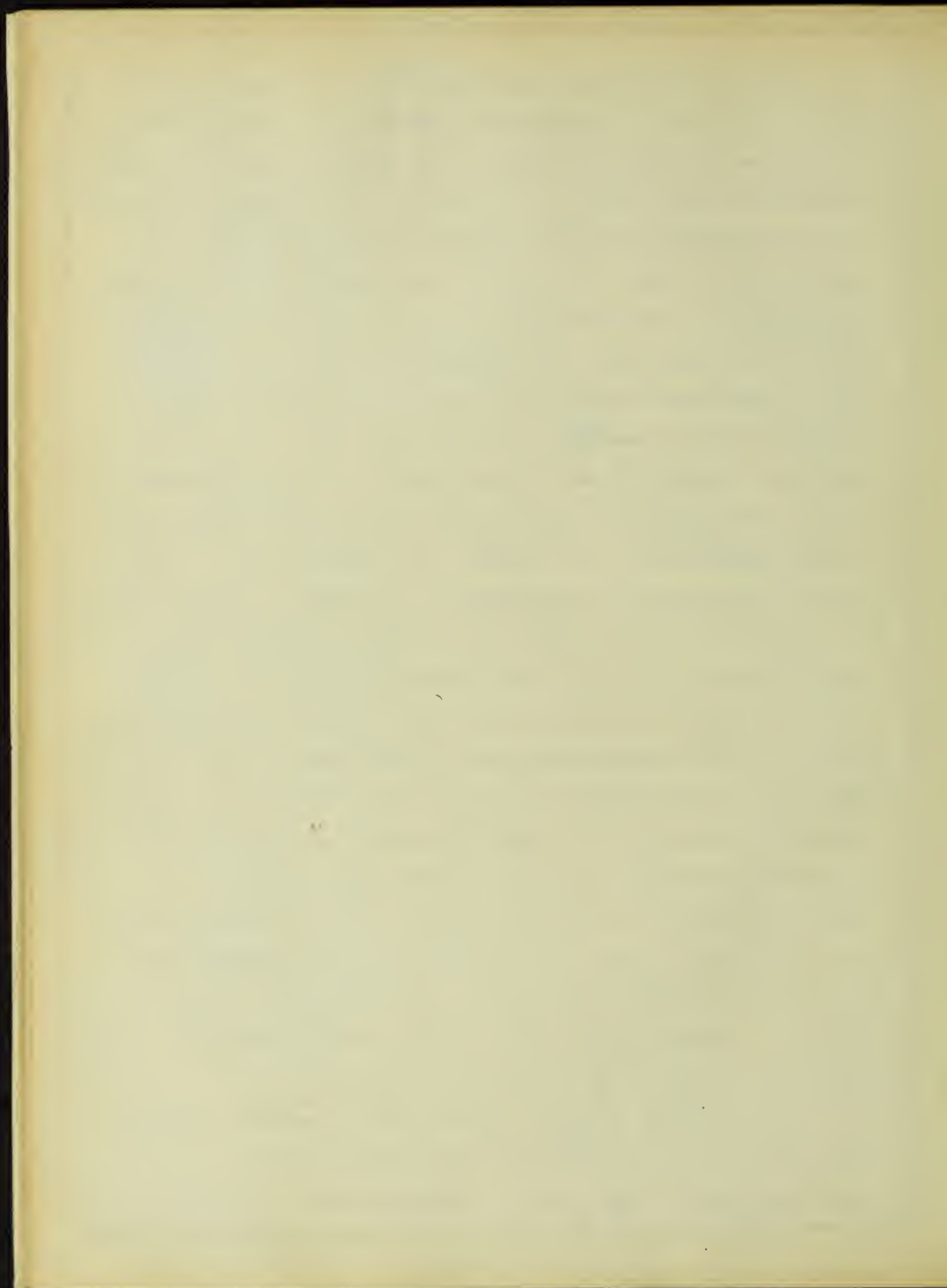
In an admirable miniature of the mind and character of Rousseau, written to refute Mme. de Staël's expressed opinion that "the imagination was the first and absorbing faculty of Rousseau's nature," Hazlitt has left us a definition of his regard for Rousseau and of his estimate of Rousseau's place in the intellectual world. He has not, it may be remarked, proven to the satisfaction of many of the French that Jean-Jacques was not as Mme. de Staël delineated him, and the latest Gallic critiques¹ reaffirm her fundamental statement concerning his imaginative endowment, although they of course desert her untenable position that he had "great strength of reason", even on abstract questions; but this may be largely a matter of their interpretation of a word common to the two languages. "The only quality," says Hazlitt, "which he possessed in an eminent degree, which alone raised him above ordinary men, and which gave to his writings and opinions an influence greater, perhaps, than any which has been exerted by any individual in modern times, was extreme sensibility, or an acute and even morbid feeling of all that related to his own impressions, to the objects and events of his life. Every feeling in his mind became a passion. He owed the power which he exercised over the opinions of all Europe to the tyranny which his feelings in the first instance exercised over himself. His ideas differed from those of other men only in their force and intensity. It was this strong feeling of sentiment, accumulating in his mind, which overpowers and absorbs the feelings of his readers. He owes all his power to sentiment." And when it came to sentiment in Hazlitt and Rousseau, deep called unto deep.

1. Lemaitre; Chugnot

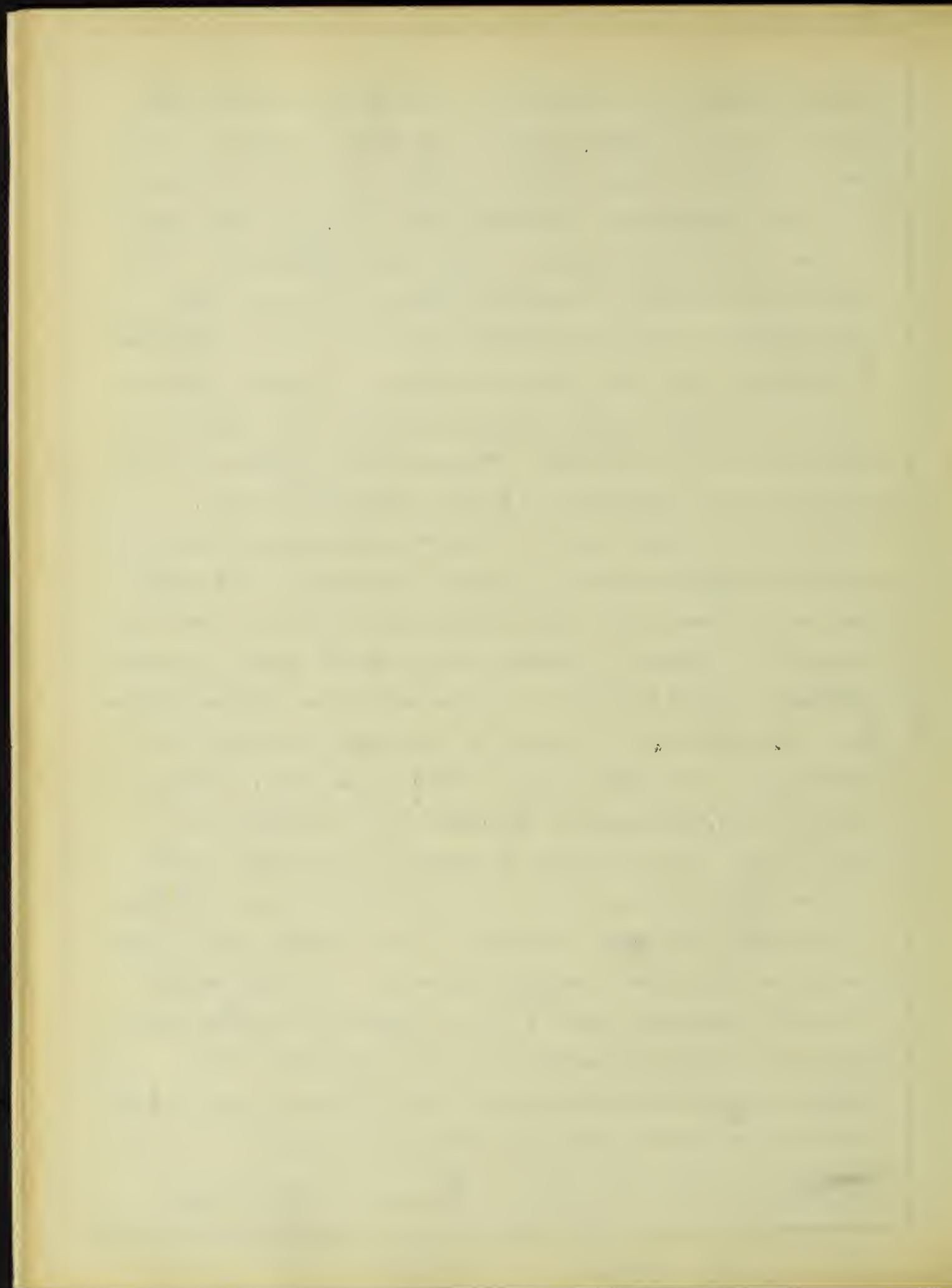


It was sentiment that they had chiefly in common; and it was to this superior intensity and eloquence of personal feeling in Rousseau that Hazlitt, in whom it was repressed only by a well-developed critical sense, paid tribute. From Rousseau's intimate and glowing egotism he traced the magnificent luxuriance and sonority of his style, and the force and reality of his language. He thought him as truly poetic in it as Wordsworth, with all the latter's 'floating dreams' on the Cumberland; and this is far more than the mere casual exhibition of one of the primary traits of all romanticists- the trait of individualism. If there was anything the truth-assertive, yet shyly subjective Hazlitt liked, it was the linking with strong native feeling of that elevated phase of individualism which the Germans call *persönlichkeit*. "Had Rousseau possessed more comprehension of thought or feeling," he remarked to James Northcote, "it would only have diverted him from his object. But it was the excess of his egotism, and his utter blindness to everything else, that found a corresponding sympathy in the conscious feelings of every human breast, and shattered to pieces the pride of rank or circumstance by the pride of internal worth or upstart pretension." Of that sort of literature expressive of personal hopes, aspirations, and experiences, Hazlitt himself has for all his tinge of Saxon reserve left us no slight quantity, from "My First Acquaintance with Poets," to "The Sick-Chamber". What he liked of it in Rousseau, however, was the lyric feeling and the passionate sentiment which imbued every thought of the man.

His own gifts of logic and consistency, ^{nevertheless} ~~however~~, left him at no loss to fix Rousseau's rank as a reasoner rather low. No Englishman who for ten years had disciplined his mind with the



severest metaphysical labors could countenanceⁿ one who prefaced a discussion of the existent social and economic situation with, "Let us begin by putting aside all facts, for they have nothing to do with the question. The researches with we may make should be taken only as hypothetical or conditional reasonings." ¹ He regarded Jean-Jacques as a glowing nucleus of feeling, about which systems of the hopes and ideals of mankind built themselves up formlessly. His mind, he felt, lacked the logical comprehension of the greatest political philosophers, or the constructive practicality of the statesman. "He was utterly blind to all but his own egotism". Elsewhere he speaks less severely^e of him. "Rousseau was too ambitious of an exceedingly technical and scientific mode of reasoning, scarcely attainable in the mixed questions of human life, and it is probable that he was led into this error in seeking to overcome his too great warmth of natural temperament, and a tendency to indulge merely the impulses of passion." He here gives him credit for an appreciable amount of sustained and tenaciously logical thought, - and now, if we may use that image, feathered by sentiment so as to fly with the greater force. "The weakness and poverty of his reason arises from the fact that this faculty was in him artificial, secondary, and dependent," he remarks in still a third instance, and in this also may be discovered a certain concession. He would never, it must be emphasized, grant a claim of Rousseau's to the discovery of any novel principle, or novel arrangement of old principles, or to any extraordinary power of reason in enforcing common truths; but he grants him a sublime primacy in his enthusiasm. 1. Discours sur Les Origines de L' Inegalite Parmi les Hommes.



siasm, and his power of infusing titanic life into an infant thesis. The same generalization applies to the conclusions of Rousseau's thought. "The danger of all imaginary schemes of improvement", he tells us in the "Reply to Malthus," arises from their being exaggerations of the real capacities of our nature,--from supposing that we can pick out all the dross and leave nothing but the gold; that is, from their being carried to excess." But his whole life was an admission that the benefits accruing from the fervid advocacy of ideal schemes, when those schemes enlisted the deepest yearnings of the human heart, was such as to make martyrdom in their cause the highest glory.

Chapter 2; Autobiographical Individualism.

To the tracing of the detailed influences of Rousseau upon Hazlitt this major premise,--that that which Hazlitt valued most in Rousseau was his peculiar qualities of feeling--was a *the chief confirmation of which will be seen* foundation, in all that we shall hereafter say. Hazlitt brushed away the Genevan's syllogisms, his expositions, his labored arguments; he was fired by the spirit back of them. "An Englishman's feelings," he says in his life of Holcroft, "are, for the very reason that they require a greater momentum to bring them out, more steady and more strong than a Frenchman's". This he considered a proposition allied to the one that "in apprehension the French have more facility and nicety of observation; our own countrymen have shown greater strength and comprehension of mind." But he believed implicitly in the life governed by sentiment, in the career over which hung always the guiding wings of

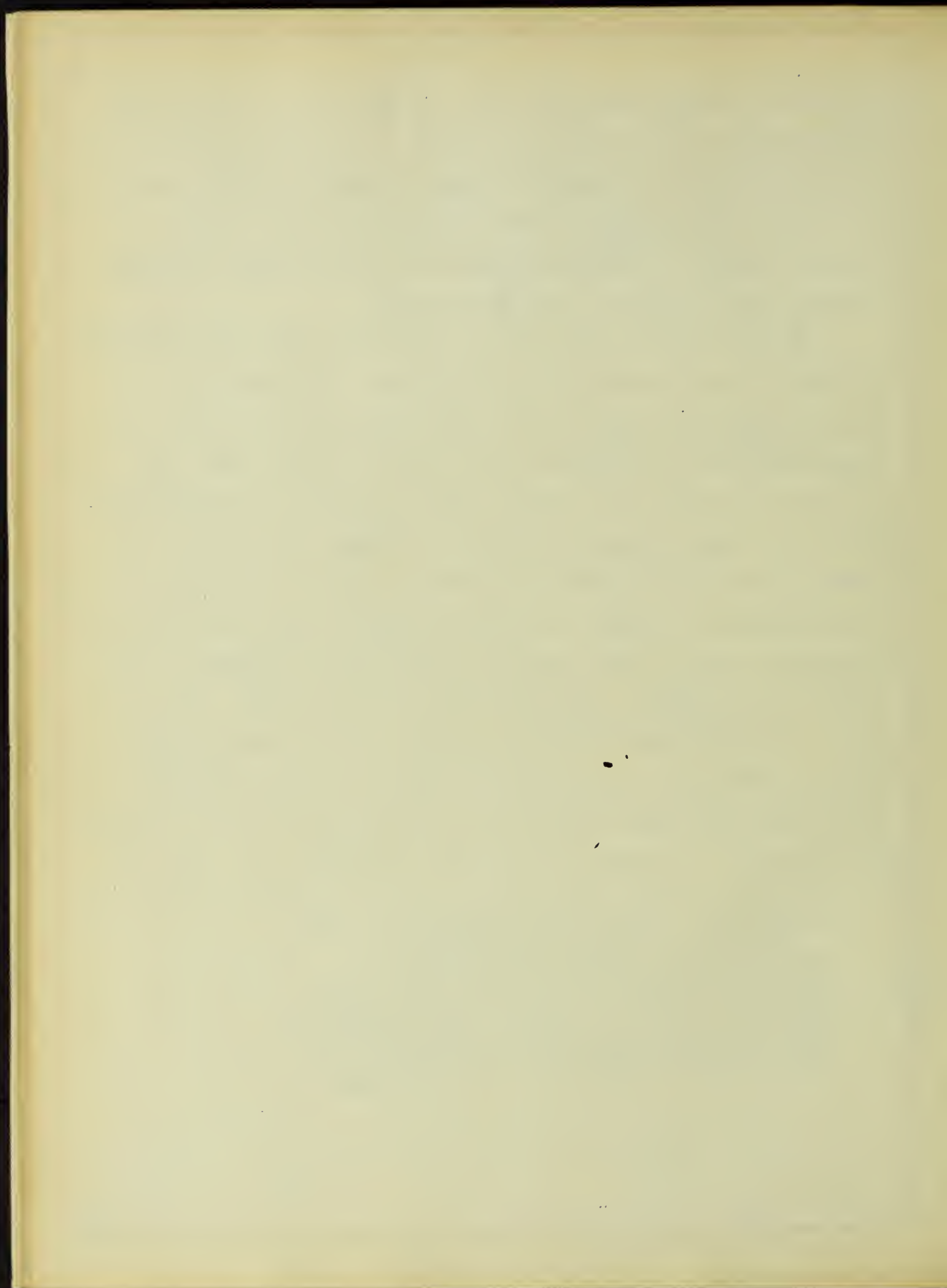
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the Ideal; and this hunger his love for Rousseau satisfied. His sensitiveness to the great man's egotism, to his subjectivism, and to his glowing spirit show what awoke an answering chord in his own bosom. "The gravity of the English," he laments in the Political Essays, "frequently degenerates into phlegm, coldness, reserve, pride, obstinacy, and sullenness."

He was himself cursed with a superficial pride and sullenness that must often have sent him to the pages of the volatile Rousseau for an antidote; but his heart at bottom was tender and unselfish, and he had a passion for truth and beauty that could melt all his reserve into warmth, candor, and even militant energy. "Happy are they," he repeats thrice in his works, "who live in the dream of their own existence, and see all things in the light of their own minds; who walk by faith and hope; who see all things by the guiding star of their youth, and into whom the spirit of the world has not entered.---The world has no hold on them. They are in it, not of it; and a dream and a glory is ever around them!*" This is paralleled by the creed of the Savoyard vicar; "Let me follow the Inner Light; it will not lead me so far astray as others have done, or if it does it will be my own fault, and I shall not

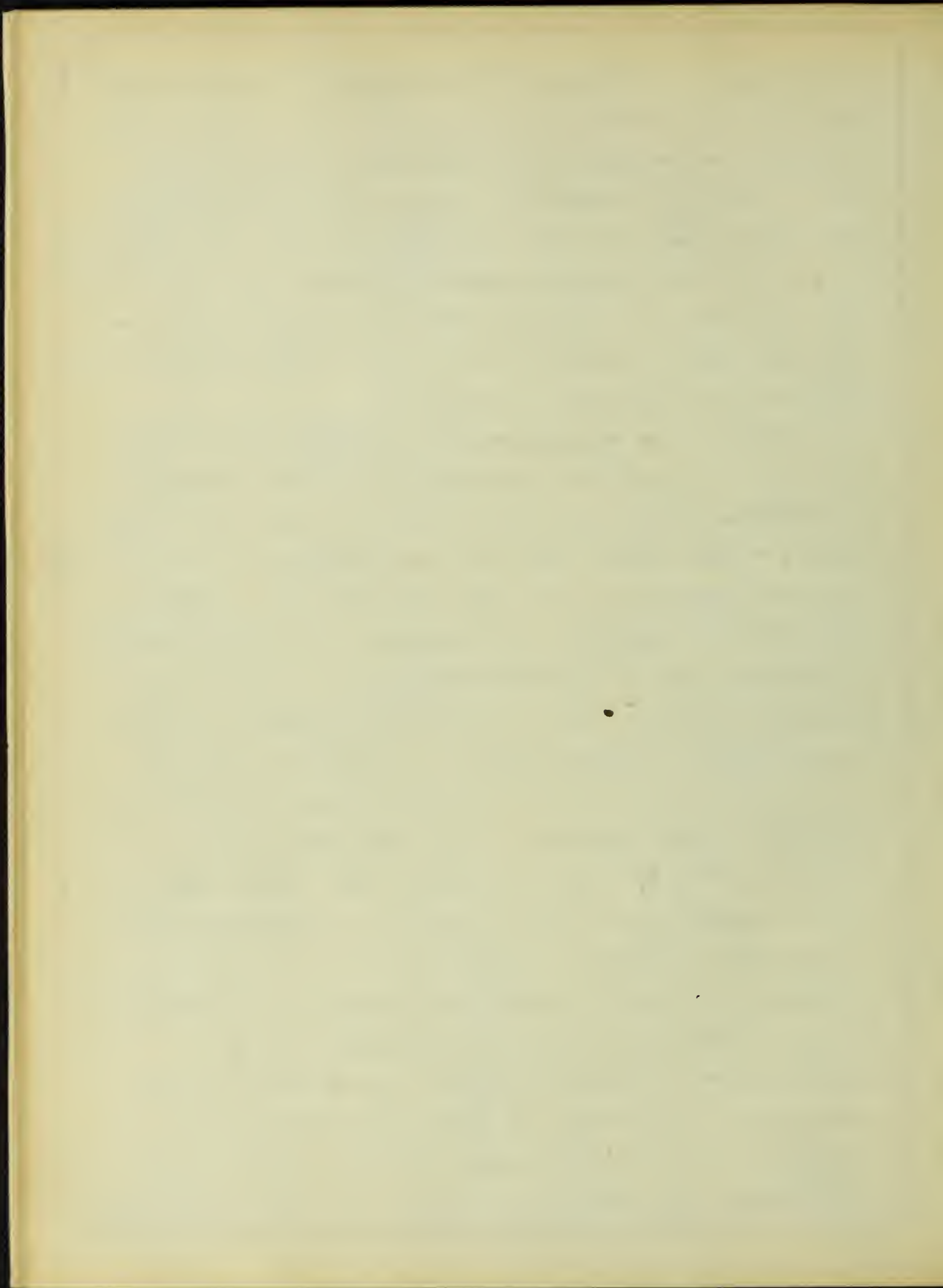
*cf Wordsworth, several years previously, 1806;

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light,
That makes the path before him always bright;
etc.



go far wrong if I follow my own illusions as if I trusted to their deceits." Hazlitt's was the firm integrity that confided in the heart, and even Rousseau could not at times light him on his way. "I Wonder", he observes in "Reason and the Imagination," "that Rousseau gave in to this cant about the want of soundness in rhetorical and imaginative reasoning. Knaves argue against the use of our senses and feelings in what concerns human nature because they know the refinements of the head are more easily got rid of than the suggestions of the heart."

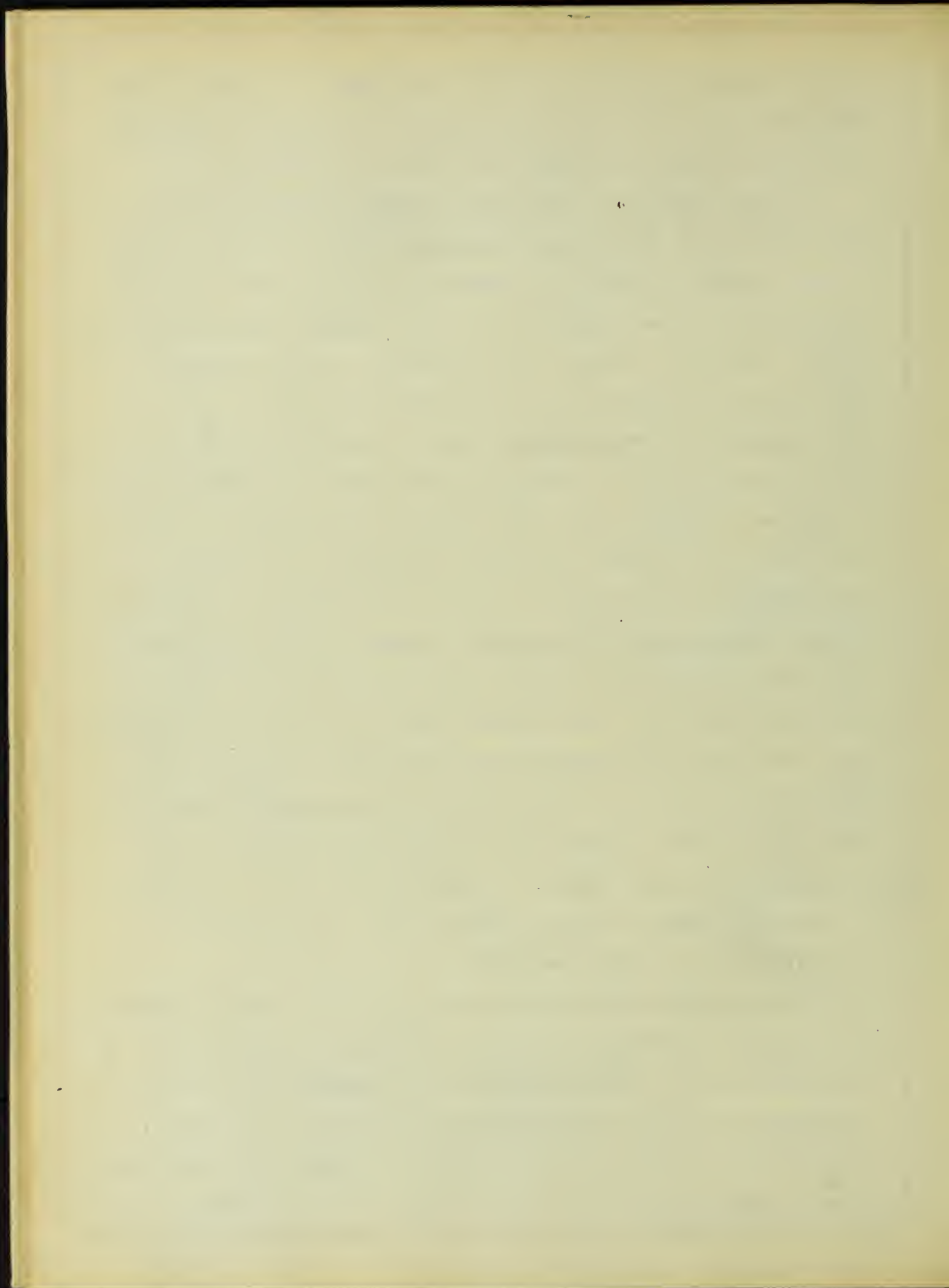
The Hazlitt ^h who so often censures Rousseau's want of reason, speaks just as often of the contemptibility of that endowment. "No foundation even of our moral actions, " he says in the Plain Speaker, " is so flimsy. Would you extirpate all the natural and private affections of the force, tenderness, and constancy that they derive from habit, local nearness, or immediate sympathy? No, sentiment should be admitted to its share in the governance of action." This is from a reply to Godwin's theory of utilitarianism, and in its context is a metaphysical piece of reasoning; but Hazlitt is far from being unappreciative also of the poetic nature of sentiment. "It is the precious link", he moralizes in "The New School of Reform", "that connects together the finer essence of our past and future by an expressive symbol. To deprive man of sentiment is to deprive him of all that is interesting to himself or others, and to turn him into a savage." Rousseau was the man of feeling par excellence- a being of quivering nerves, susceptible emotions, and over-developed expressiveness. His sentiment, so clearly fundamental to the Confessions, the Elois^e, the Revenes, that if we removed it from them we should have nothing left, animated his ideas in every one



of his philosophical and political treatises. It is this transformation of sentiment into an ennobling enthusiasm for whatever doctrine or thought he touches that captivates Hazlitt.

The most intimate of the many parallel manifestations of strong feeling in Hazlitt and Rousseau is undoubtedly to be seen in their romantic love of the personal past; it is the most subjective, the most emotional, and in each probably the most frequently met. Those who run may read in Rousseau how egotistical was the power of his sentiment, for all his authorship was at least semi-autobiographical. Of his Confessions, of his Floise, indeed, of all his works, we may say what he himself said of the *Lettres de la Montagne*--"sans le moi, ils^{n'}y'auraient pas existé!"; for in every one of his books he relives his own past. In Hazlitt this strongly colored egoism is so far from being ubiquitous that we find little beyond the excusable interweaving in his essays of those youthful recollections for which he retained the same emotional sensibility that Rousseau felt for everything about himself. His love of the personal past was rather reflective than sentimental, and its literary use was seldom uncalculating; he closes many of his informal essays with a bit of reminiscence purely for rhetorical effect. In general, however, the impulse of the whole Romantic movement was behind it, and in certain recurring moods it claims cousinship with Rousseau.

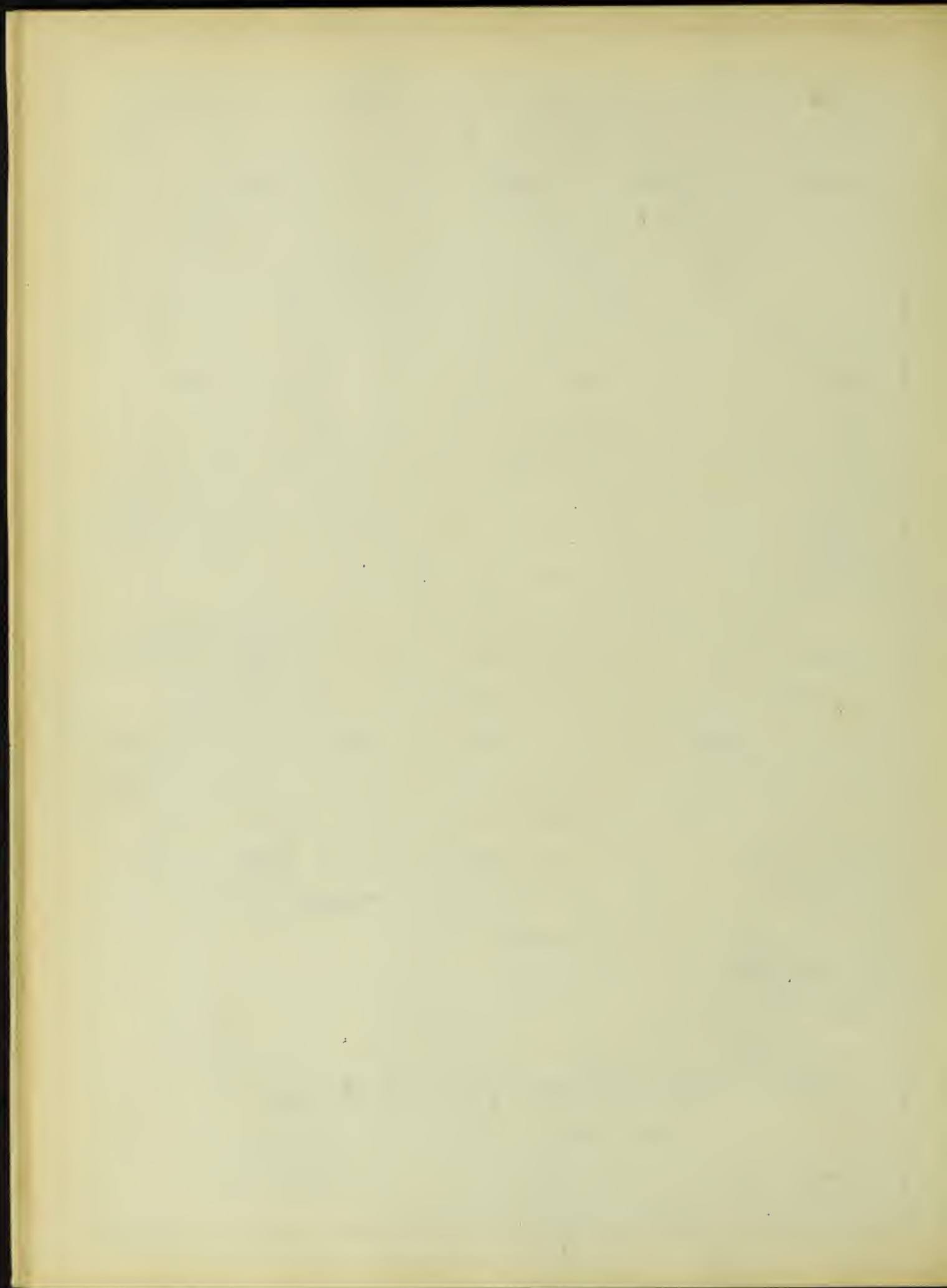
The deep affection that he felt in his high room at Winterslow Hutt for the "skies and suns so pure"¹ that lighted up his early path was the identical emotion that Rousseau felt in his reminiscent musings at the Hermitage, four leagues from Paris. Such a feeling exists in all men when that pathway has wound past so many years of their life that the sun of Hope and Energy has



passed the meridian and become the sun of Memory and Philosophic Reflection; but in Hazlitt's feeling is often obvious that acknowledgement of its impulse in Rousseau that other writers, from Chateaubriand to Daudet, have also left us. It is the past, he says in his Table Talk, "that gives me most delight and most assurance of reality. What to me constitutes the great charm of the Confessions of Rousseau is their turning so much upon this feeling. He seems to gather up the past moments of his being like drops of honey-dew, to distil a precious liquor from them; his alternate pleasures and pains are the bead-roll he tells over and piously worships; he makes a rosary of the flowers of hope and fancy that strewn his earliest years."¹ It is not difficult to trace further the similarity of feeling thus indicated.

From the Eden of innocent childhood, through the gateway of burgeoning youth, both men had been driven by the angle Time with the flaming sword of pain and responsibility. Says Rousseau, writing to Malesherbes from the solitary leisure of his last epoch: "I made a golden age to please my own fancy, and filling up these fair days with all those scenes of my life that had left sweet memories behind, I waxed tender even to shedding tears over the true pleasures of humanity."^{1*} So again he writes, when with reluctance he turns over the last page of the first part of his Confessions: "The sweet remembrance of my youthful years, passed with as much of tranquility as of innocence, have left me a thousand charming impressions, which I love to recall to myself without
bientot combien sont différents ceux du reste de
cessation. Ou verra ma vie."² It is with the same quiet regret for all over which the Past had thrown its glamorous mantle, with the same regurgitation and retasting of joys consumed, that

1. C-34; 1* Lettres; 2-Confessions, Book 6.

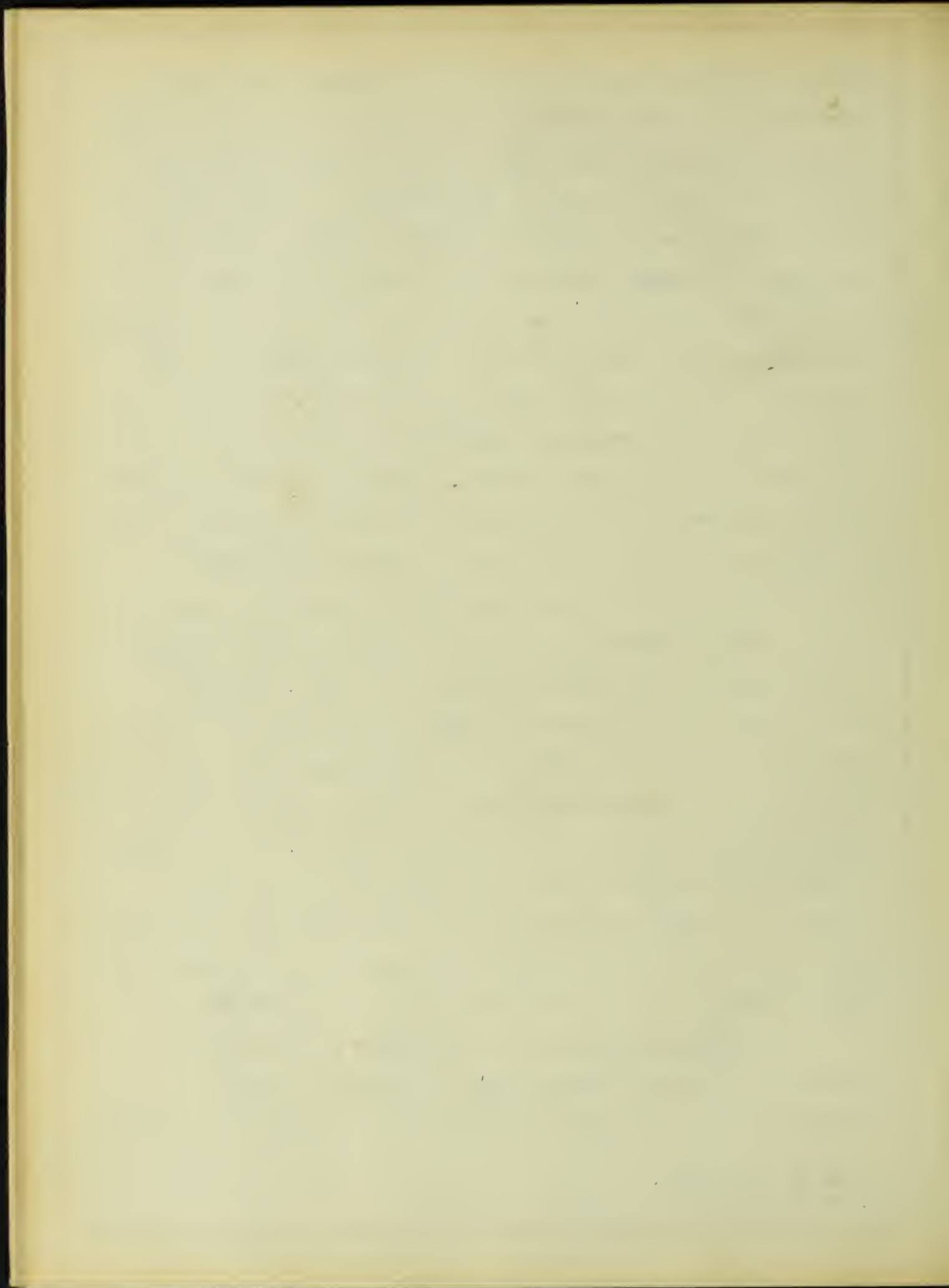


Hazlitt, in those later days when 'food, warmth, sleep, and a boot^k' were confessedly the Ultima Thule of his desire, wrote of his faithfulness to the birds and the spring, that "lead me back to that dreaming world, in the innocence of which they sat and made sweet music, waking the promise of future years, and answered by the eager throbbings of my own breast,"¹ and of the faraway days when, like a rustic at a fair, he was full of delight and rapture at "the brave sublunary things this pageant of life presented, like a ball or a fête of the universe." To both, love of reminding nature, with its kinaesthetic touch upon the memory, was closely connected with the past. Rousseau in his Confessions relates that when he took possession of Annecy he found that from his room he could see a little spot of green, which endeared the situation the more to him because "it was the first time I had had this object constantly before me since I had left Boissy", the place where he had attended school as a child. Hazlitt believed that some such feeling lurked at the bottom of all our attachments of the sort. "Were it not", he says, "for the recollections habitually associated with them, natural objects could not interest the mind in the manner they do. It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in solitude, with change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends, that we love them as we do ourselves."²

In even the most extreme of its aspects the passion of Rousseau for childhood found a faint reflection in Hazlitt. The naturalistic philosopher saw in that age the one where modern

1. The Love of Life.

2. Love of Natural Objects.

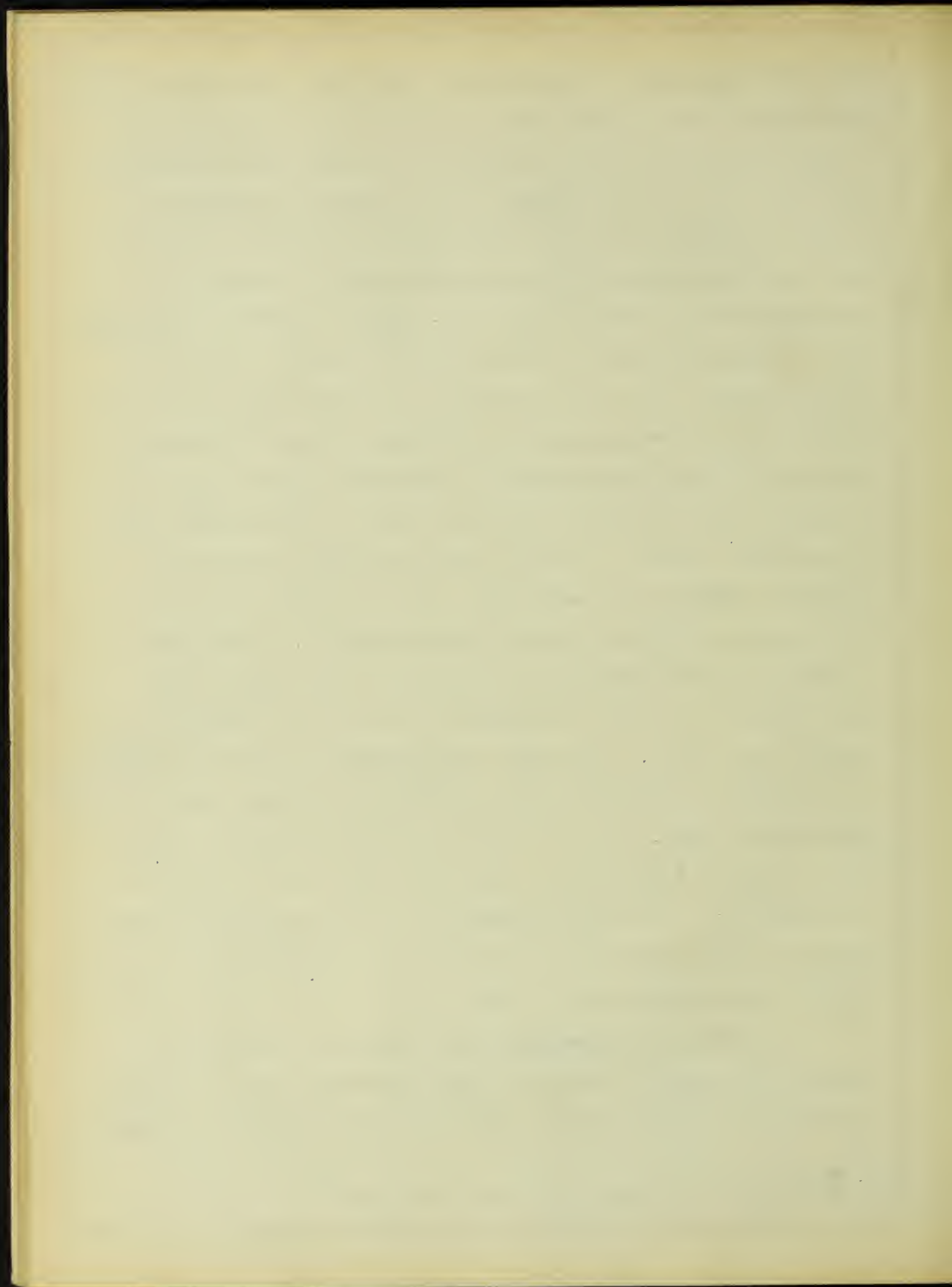


man most approached, in the blooming simplicity, guilelessness, and warmth of the childish heart, to the always dreamed-of and longed-for state of nature, in which the savage typified all that was noble, wise, and contented. It is because the uneducated child is a species of brown, vigorous Indian that he tells us in *Emile* to "hold childhood in reverence"; and it is because he believes that "men were not made to be crowded together in anthills" that he counsels parents to "send their children to maintain in the open fields the moral and physical strength that would otherwise be lost in the foul air of our crowded cities." Childhood to him was a brief reminiscence of man's whilom golden age, much as science sees the embryo young reproduce the evolutionary past of an animal. So, too, Hazlitt looked back upon childhood as something more than the mere sunny time of vanished illusions--as the age of pristine innocence and spontaneity. "Passion", he says in *the Past and Future*, "contracts and warps the natural progress of life; it paralyzes all that is not devoted to its tyranny and caprice. This makes the difference between the laughing innocence of childhood, the pleasantness of youth, and the crabbedness of age. A load of cares lies like a weight of guilt upon the mind. A knowledge of the world takes away the freedom and simplicity of thought as effectually as the contagion of its example."¹ This reflection is a commonplace thought*, but it is a form of Rousseauism for all that.

A belief in the beautiful naturalness of this period animates his eulogy of Rousseau's childhood--that long childhood of which the sentimentalist himself had said, "J'ai été longtemps

1. 6-29

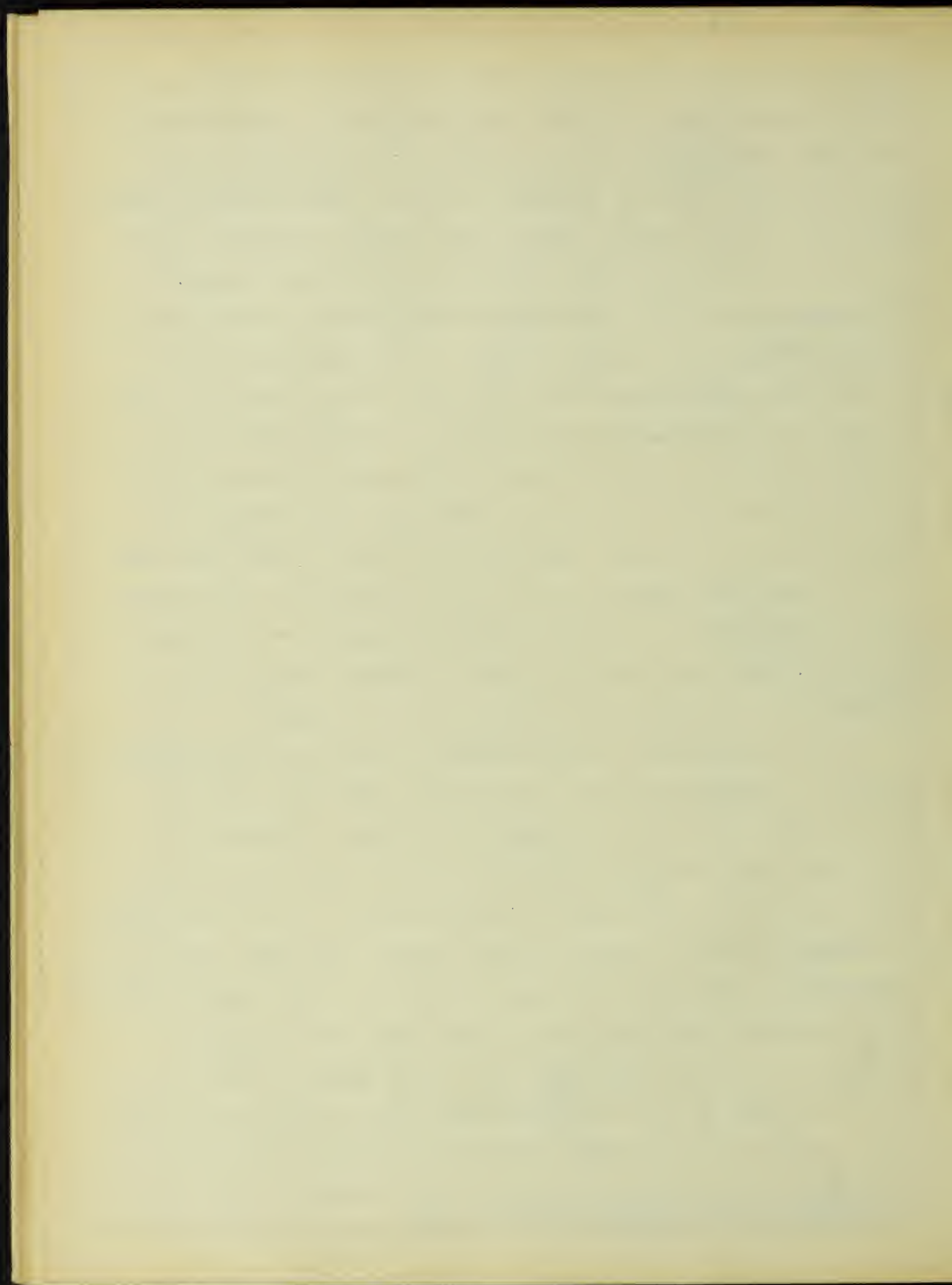
*. Obviously it may have owed much to Wordsworth.



enfant, et je le suis encore a' beaucoup d'autres "—in the Essay upon Rousseau. Rousseau had good reason for remembering a childhood deeply sensitive, and marked by an unquenchable thirst for experience that made vagrancy a passion. "Apprenticed attorney, engraver, footman, valet, clerk of the surveys, seminarist, music teacher, he always returned willingly to his life as a tramp."¹ By comparison with his childhood his mature years were dull; and perhaps Hazlitt was thinking of this in a passage illustrated by a very Saxon image. "A man shut up all his life in a shop", he says in *The Plain Speaker*, "without anything to interest him from one year's end to another but the cares of business, turns for relief to the retrospect of his childish years; and there through the long vista, at one bright loophole, leading out of the thorny maze of the world into the clear morning light, he sees the idle fancies and gay amusements of his boyhood days dancing like motes in the sunshine. Shall we blame him or shall we laugh at him, if his eye glistens and his tongue grows wanton in their praise?"

His faith in the attractiveness of unspoiled childhood led Hazlitt to express occasional naturalistic ideas upon education which almost echo certain passages of the *Emile*. Rousseau had laid out a system by which the child might be reared as naturally as a tender plant grows, and to the superiority of this spontaneity in education Hazlitt casually, though nowhere designedly, refers. "Anyone", he says, "who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and not been made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. Boys who shine at school do not make the greatest figure when they grow up and come out into the world. A lad with a sickly constitution and no very active mind will usually be at the head of his class.

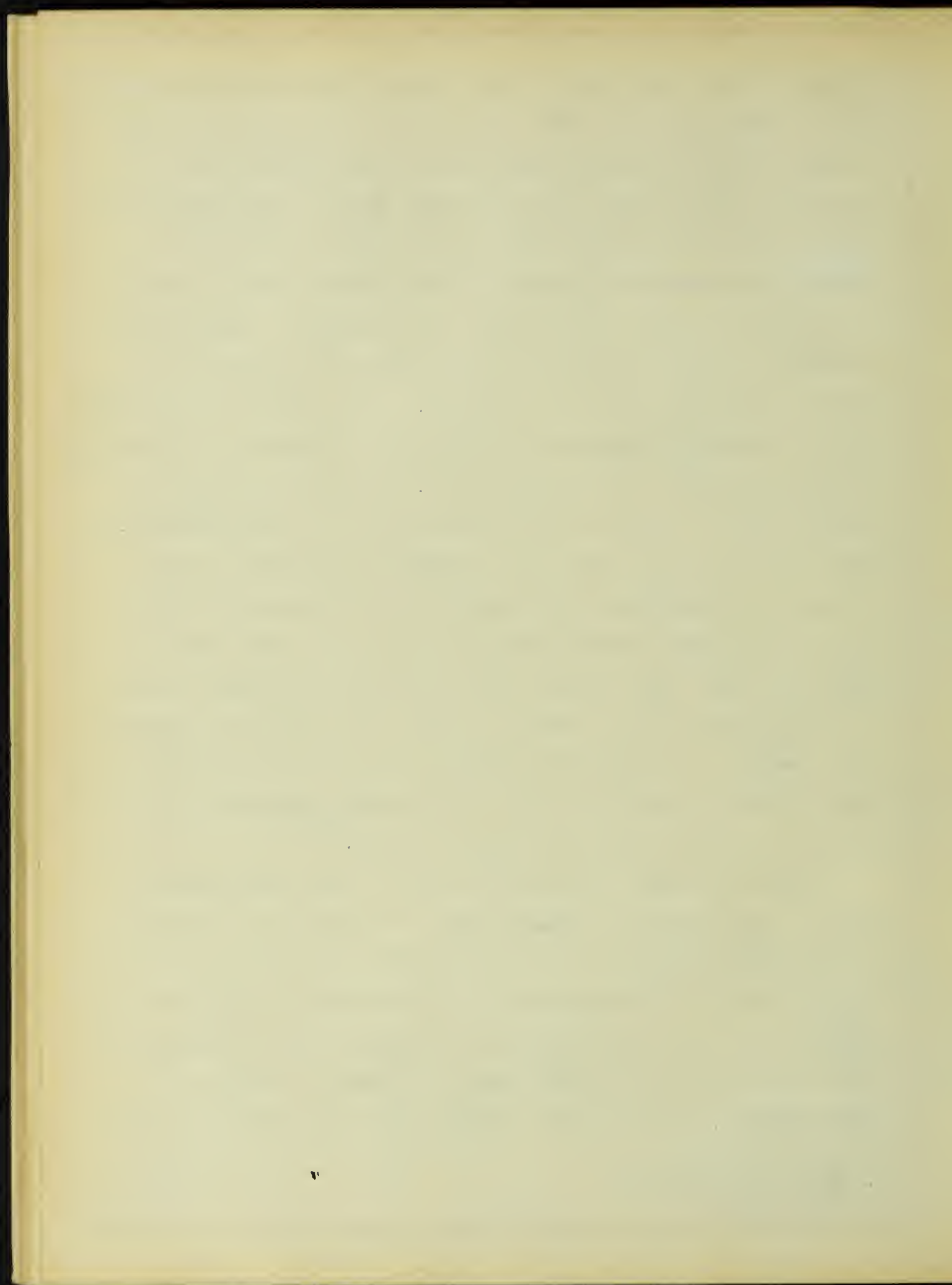
1. Lemaitre; Jean Jacques Rousseau, 1910.



An idler, on the other hand, is one who has high health and spirits, and the free use of his limbs, with all his wits about him, ready to laugh or cry in a breath, and who had rather chase a ball or a butterfly, feel the open air in his face, look at the fields or the sky, than doze over a musty spelling book, repeat barbarous distichs, and receive his reward for the loss of time and pleasure in paltry prize-medals at Christmas and Midsummer." "Schoolboys," he remarks in another connection, "should apply to that for which they may find they have a capacity. If a boy has no inclination for the Latin tongue, it is a sign that he has not a turn for learning languages. Yet he dances well. Give up the thought of making a scholar of him, and bring him up to be a dancing-master." There is the same fear here of an artificial perversion of the childish nature exhibited by Rousseau in his exclamation, "Dark places of the human understanding, what rash hand shall dare to raise your veil? What pitfalls does our so-called science prepare for the miserable child. Would you guide him along this dangerous path? Beware of the specious charms of error and the intoxicating fumes of pride. Keep this truth ever before you--ignorance never did anyone any harm, and error alone is fatal."²

Hazlitt's ideas of education, however, never approached a system. His naturalistic remarks were but thrown out at random, as evidences of his appreciation of the beauty of childhood, and of his own wish that it might develop into maturity with that spontaneity which would least sully its freshness; while his conceptions of childhood were those formed from his own highly perfumed memories. But his whole reverence for that period of life is

1. Application to Study.
2. Emile-1 Bk.



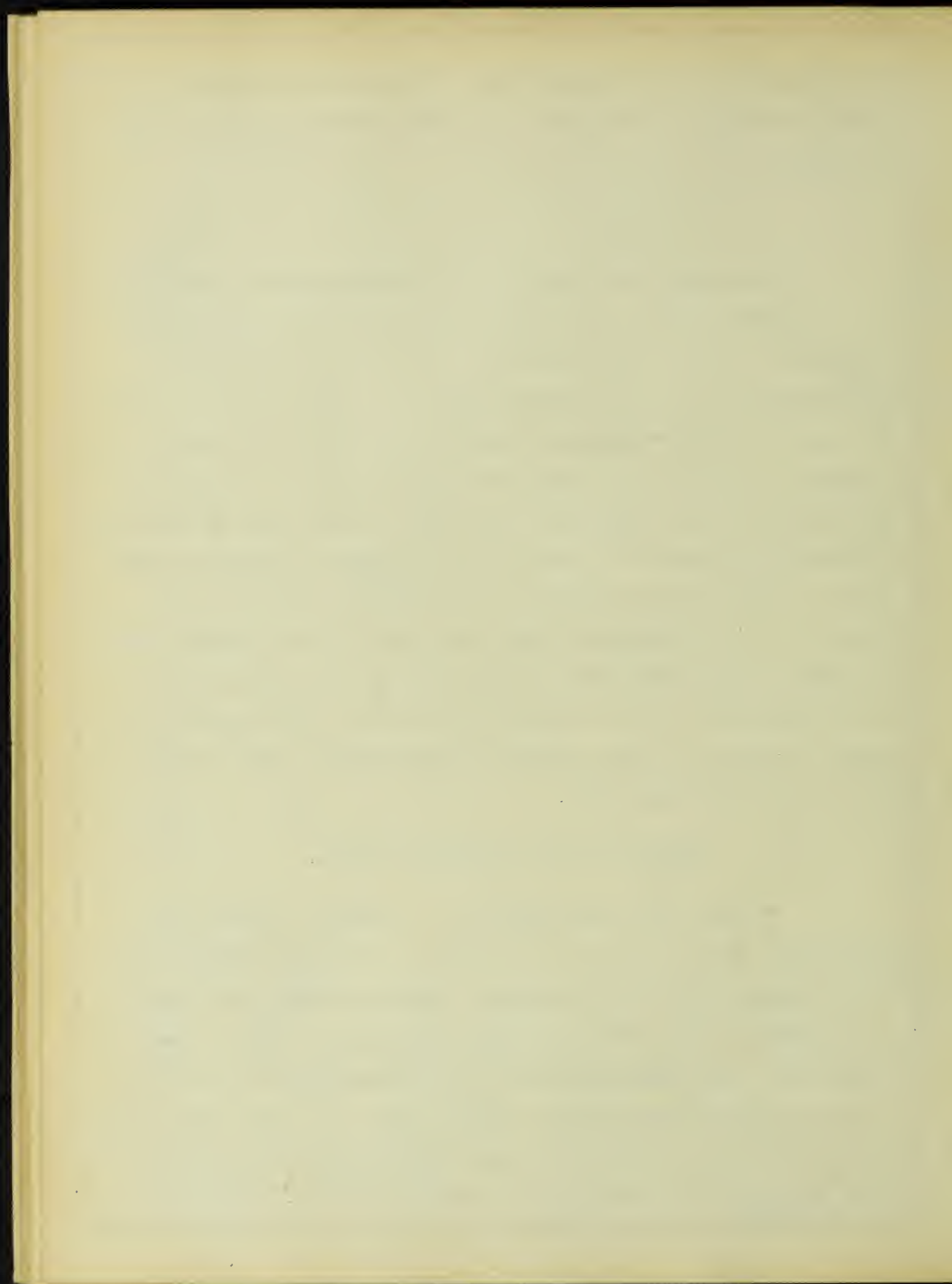
at least one index of a subjectivism and an emotional egoism closely analagous to Rousseau's, and therefore|intrinsically worthy of analysis.

That other chief aspect in which strong personal feeling had a dominantly subjective tone in both writers is in their love of Nature. The two main tendencies in the romantic treatment of Nature during the last one hundred years have been obviously divergent upon an issue which finds Rousseau and Hazlitt very nearly in accord. Is it a fair canvas, upon which the eye is to rest in unthinking objective delight?-- from which the emotions may take but a momentarily brisker flow, as from any physically agreeable sensation? Or may it be the source of keen spiritual impulses, and productive of that reflective mood which gives us our highest power of reason in the moment when the subconscious finds through the the perceptions a source of emotional delight? With Rousseau's answer as always the more intense and sentimental, both writers have returned the same reply.

Chapter 3: Attitude toward Nature.

"I once sat," says Hazlitt in the Essay on Novelty and Familiarity, "on a sunny bank in a field in which the green blades of corn waved in the fitful northern breeze, and read the letter in the New Elcise in which St. Preux describes the Pays de Vaud. I never felt what Shakespeare calls my "glassy essence" so much as then. My thoughts were pure and free. They took a tone from the objects before me, and from the simple manners of the inhabitants of mountain scenery so well described in the letter." 1 All his

1. 7-304.



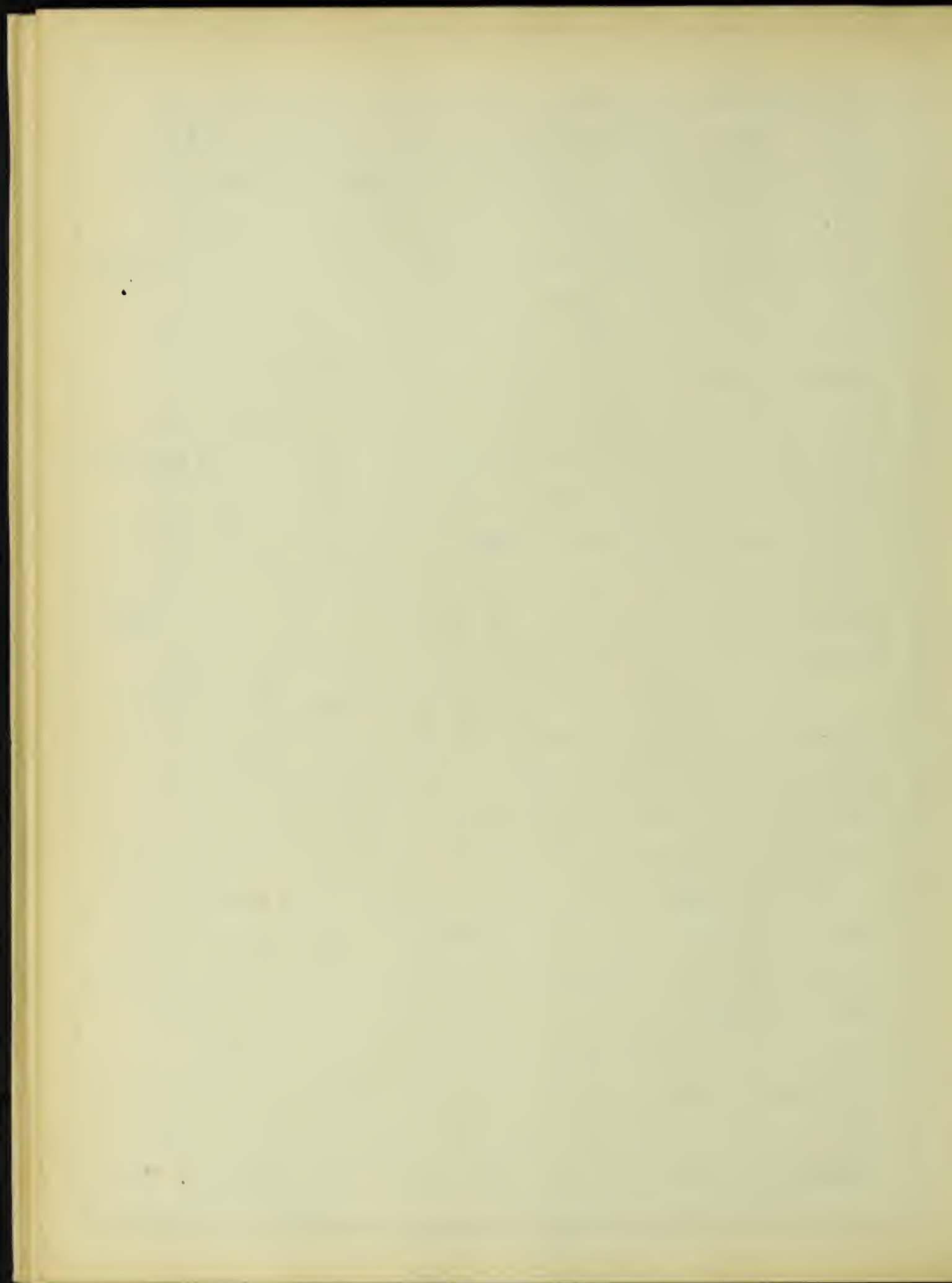
life Hazlitt's reflective intellectuality was stimulated by nature, and the flame of his predilection for it was one early kindled. After an interval of thirty years, he somewhere¹ tells us, he still remembered vividly the taste of the barberries of the North American forests he had visited as a child. Of his English boyhood, "A temperament of unusual ardor," says Talford, "glowed amidst those lonely fields, and imparted to the silent objects of nature a weight of interest akin to that with which Poussieu has oppressed the picture of his early years." When in late youth he turned to painting, the landscapes of Nicholas Poussin² and Claude Lorraine were among the works which most charmed him, and to which he later reverted with the most pleasure. And in his last days he unlocked the caskets of memory but "to see the beds of larkspurs with purple eyes; tall holy-oaks, red and yellow; the broad sunflowers, caked in gold, with bees buzzing around them "as in the time when his father led him by the hand down the gravel walks of an old garden. Natural objects struck not less vividly upon Hazlitt's soul than upon Poussieu's; he had a true eye for color and form; and despite the essentially subjective bias of their regard for nature, both he and the Frenchman could joy in her corporeal beauty and project her image in glowing words and rich phrases. "C'était ici," writes Jean-Jacques to a correspondent from Montmorency, "que la nature sembloit deployer a mes yeux une magnificence toujours nouvelle. L'or des genets et le pourpre des bruyères frappoient mes yeux d'un luxe qui touchoit mon coeur; la majeste des arbres, la delicatesses des arbustes, l'etonnante variété des herbes et des fleurs que je foulois sous mes pieds, tenoient mon esprit dans

1. Why Distant Objects Please, 6-259; 257.

2. See 6-168.

une alternative continuelle d'observation et d'admiration. Le concours de tant d'objets me faisoit souvent redire en moi-même, ' Non, Salomon en tout sa gloire ne fut jamais vetu comme l'un deux.' There is a vividness of coloring in this description before unknown to prose, but which Hazlitt's pen also came to compass. "In the summer I used to walk out of an evening," he writes, " to catch the last rays of the sun, gemming the green slopes or russet lawns, and gilding tower or tree, while the blue sky gradually turning to purple and gold, or skirted with dusky gray, hung its broad marble pavement over all. " Yet however articulate may be this sensual outlook upon nature, it can lay slight claims to refinement of feeling or strength of rational basis; and with both writers it was far transcended by a truly deep and subjective regard for the beauties of the outdoor world, beside which it fell into a secondary and supplementary place.

In his letter on Love of the Country Hazlitt has exactly defined his affection for nature. " There is that consent," he says, " and mutual harmony among all her works--one undivided spirit pervading them throughout--that, if we have once knit ourselves in hearty fellowship to any of them, whichever way we may afterward turn, we shall find a secret power to have gone out before us, moulding them into such shapes as fancy loves, informing them with life and sympathy, bidding them put on their festive looks and gayest attire at our approach, and to pour all their sweets and choicest treasures at our feet. " It is then the attunement of nature with the individual in all of his various moods, and her power forever to create a spiritual link of companionship with the human soul which endears her to Hazlitt. To his individualism and subjectivism, as to Rousseau's, she spoke a

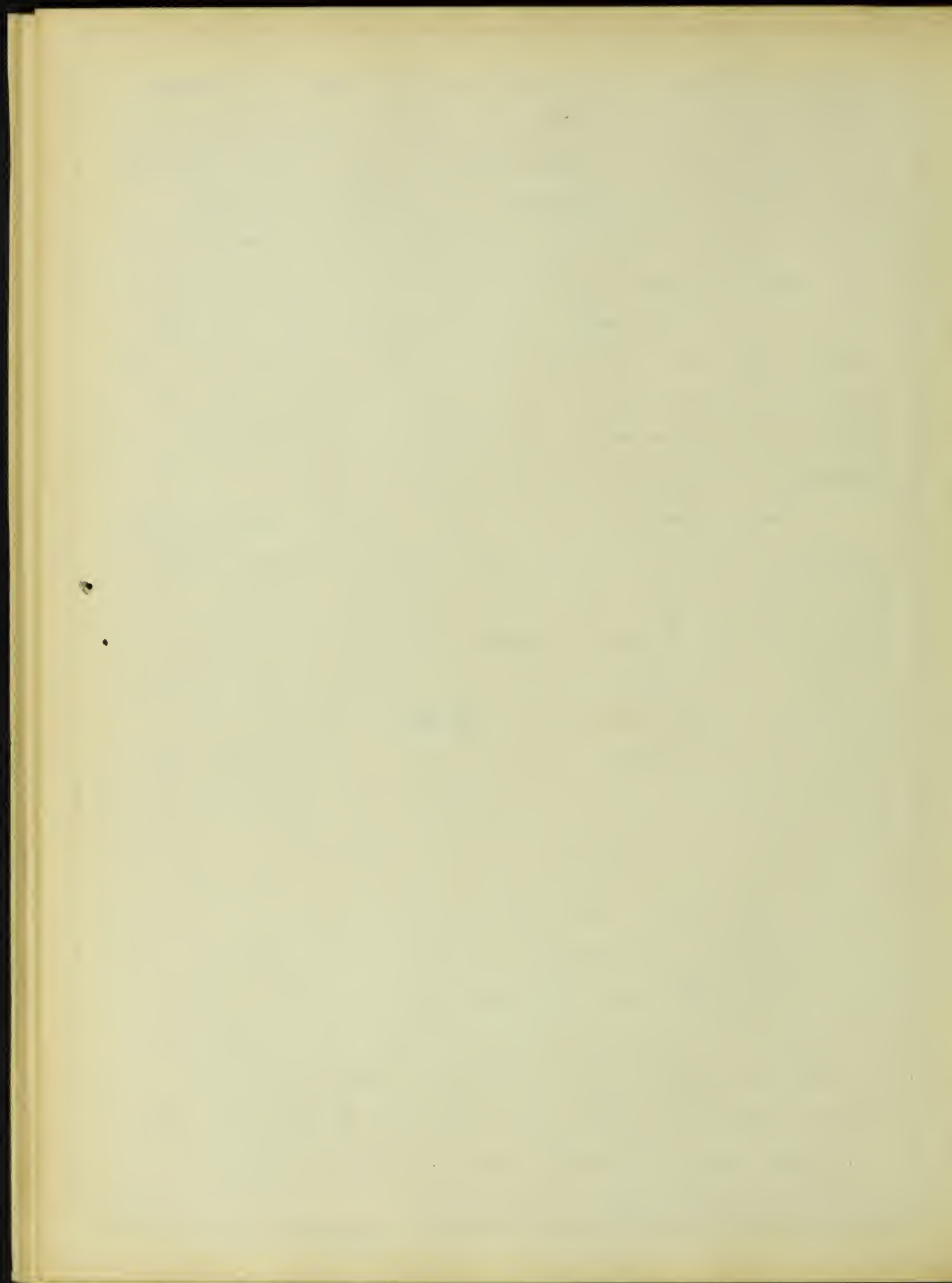


threefold language; for she inspired both to emotional thought, she furnished both with material for pensive reflections upon the past, and she gave to the weary hours of both a sense of sublime peace. Nature is the background of the clearest and highest thinking of each, indissolubly connected with their sweetest memories, and the refuge of their spirits from the constant infelicities of their "harassed feverish existences." She was always ready to usher them into those quieter moods of thought that seem like dreams, so beatific are they in their calmness, until she became almost another self in the intensity with which they connected her with their personalities.

It was Rousseau who, in the words of Textel¹, simultaneously "opened the eyes of all his contemporaries" to physical nature and inspired them with the taste for melancholy. England, it is true, had seen in Young and Thomson the ancestors of the sentimentalist in this regard, and the letter of Hazlitt's from which we have just quoted was later very properly incorporated in an essay of his upon Thomson and Cowper. But it was Rousseau, who had wandered in his youth in northern Italy and Switzerland and who delighted in the memories of that day, who alone left such reminiscent sketches of nature in the *Heloise* and the *Reveries* as exactly suited Hazlitt. He indeed remarks, apropos of a comparison of Chaucer's "The Flower and Leaf" with Rousseau's description of the *Elisée*², that the Frenchman's fancy was not that of the poet or the painter: but this does not contradict his feeling that Rousseau's appreciation of nature as a setting for deep and thoughtful feeling was a just one. He would have been

1. Joseph Texte, Rousseau & Cosmopolitanism in Literature.

2. *La Nouvelle Heloise*, 4 Lettre 10.

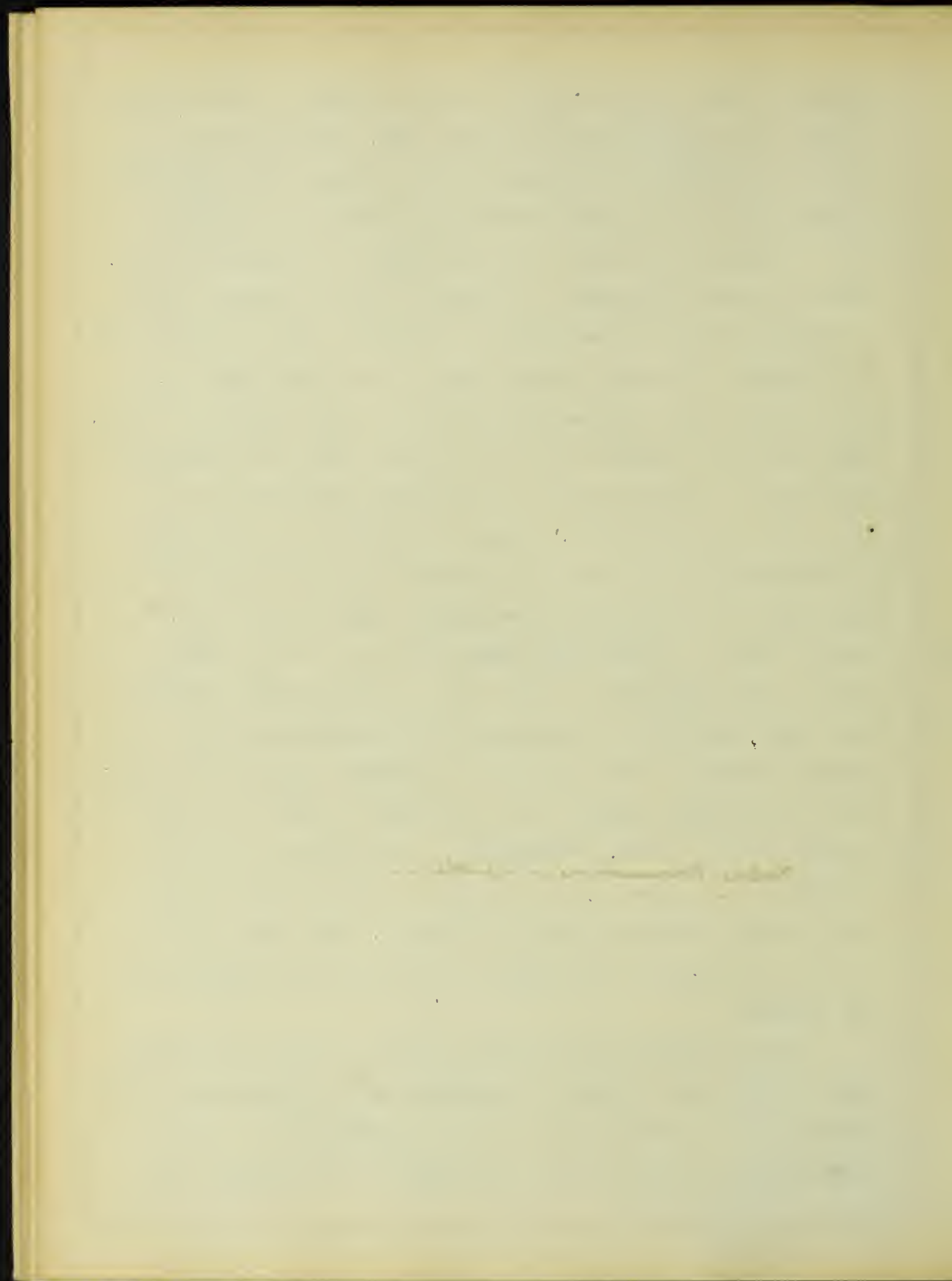


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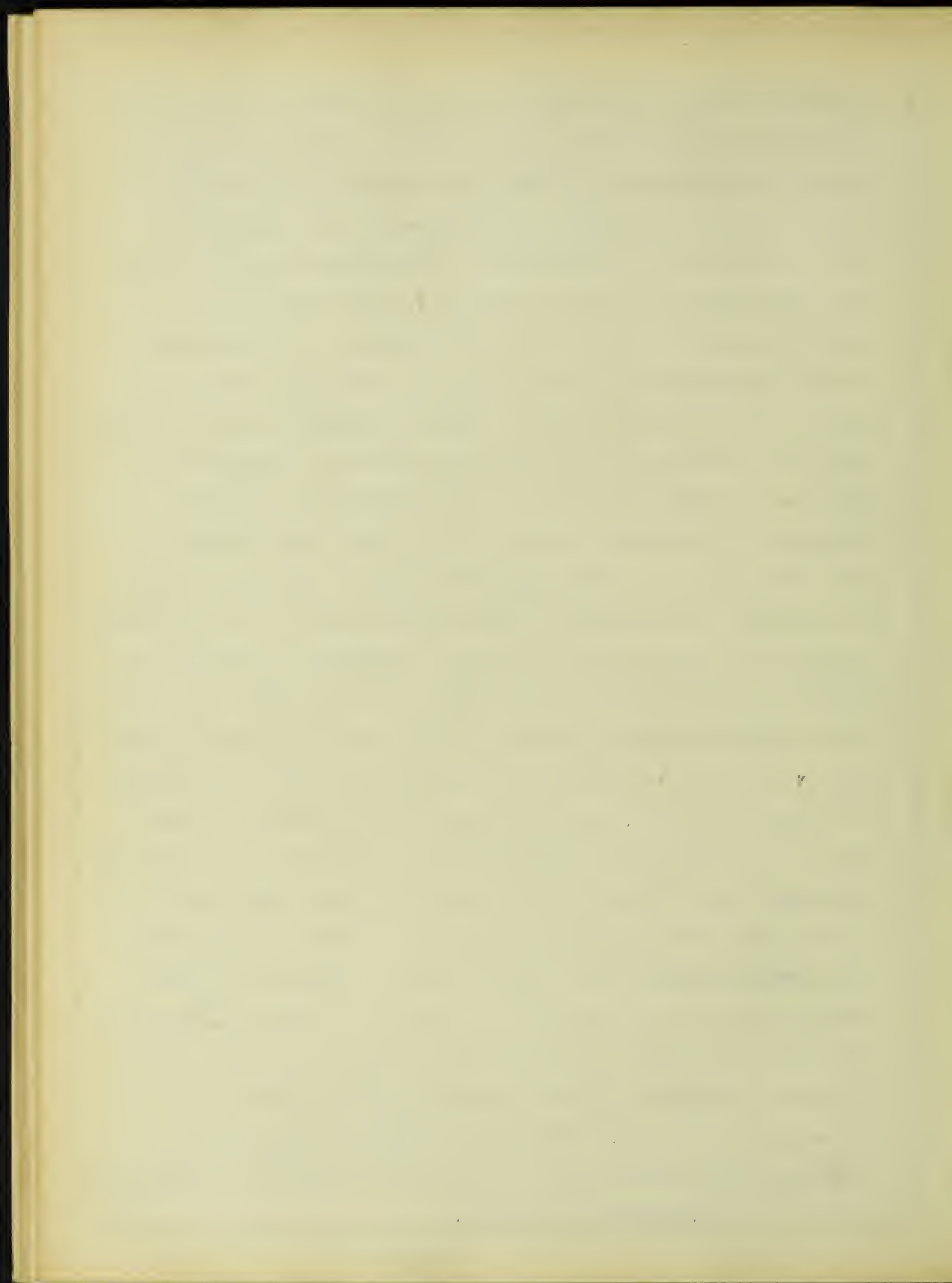
willing to have set him off as a foil or contrast to the Fenimore Cooper of whom he so harshly observed: "Mr. Cooper describes things to the life, but he puts no life in them. The elaborate accumulation of particulars serves not to embody his imagery, but to distract and impede the mind." Indeed, in one instance he directly compares Rousseau to Wordsworth, whose greatest concern in nature--exactly the antithesis of Cooper's -- was to preserve the ⁱⁿimate appeal of the most common objects to the feelings, and to exclude the burdensome oppression of dryly objective detail. "Both create an interest out of nothing but their own feelings," says Hazlitt; and we conceive that Rousseau's exclamation of 'Ah, voila de la pervenche!' comes more home to the mind than Mr. Wordsworth's discovery of the linnet's nest with its five blue eggs, or his address to the cuckoo, beautiful as it is."

Nature spoke to him with the voice of feeling, and he cared less for the achievement of the poet in giving nature a pantheistic soul than for the identification in Rousseau of the dormant chords of a scene with the personality of the writer, and for the resultant primacy of the individual in all intercourse between man and nature, "Wordsworth's poems are an emotional ^{Nature; Rousseau's are an apotheosis} apotheosis of his own soul at the moment when it is lit up by the glories of landscape, water, or forest." The latter alone seemed to Hazlitt the true union of subjectivism and feeling in her presence.

In both Hazlitt and Rousseau vigor of thought and feeling rose and fell like a sensitive barometer before the external world. Rousseau, as a young man, was wont to sing lustily on a fresh, pure morning; he could "walk in ecstasy on a delightful, dew-



moistened evening, with the sun sinking red behind the trees, and the nightingales answering song for song in them"; similarly, a bad day and the horror of urban-ruined nature suffocated his moral sensibilities, choked the sweetness of his memory, and made him hate man and circumstance. Pensiveness was one of his chief characteristics. He thought most effectively far away from "les salons, les jets d'eau, les bosquets, les parterres, et les plus ennuyeux montreurs de tout cela"¹; and it was in the height of what Hugo would call a 'delire champetre' that his head was full of various plans, which "m'offraient des sujets de meditations pour mes promenades; car je ne puis mediter qu'en marchant." It is easy to imagine him in later life walking about the grove of the Hermitage, with pencil and notes, writing his dialogues and assigning his successive ideas to one or another of the three companions of his fancy. "Here," he says in the Eighth Promenade, "sitot que je me vois sous les arbres, je crois me voir dans le paradis terrestre, et je goute un plaisir interne aussi vif que si j'etais le plus heureux des mortels." His fancy, his thought, and his imagination were with him, always a stereoscopic projection of the images brought into focus by his emotional processes; and as he says in his second dialogue; "la Lettre a M. D'Alembert, Heloise, Emile, Le Contrat Social, et les Essais sur la ~~paix~~ Perpetuelle sont les fruits de la retraite de Jean Jacques - de la vie solitaire qu'il menoit a la campagne." Hazlitt understood this species of composition, in which the treasures of the mind require for their unlocking only an exaltation transmitted by the eye. "Whatever the reader thinks fine in books assuredly existed before in the living volume of the author's



brain; it is a heirloom of the mind, the very form into which it is warped and molded; a deep and inward harmony that flows on forever, as the springs of memory and imagination release their secret stores. The author is Nature's high priest, and his mind is a temple when she treasures up her fairest and loftiest forms. These he broods over until he becomes enamoured of them, inspired by them, and communicates some portion of his ethereal fires to others." And he goes on to quote from Thomson:

" 'I care not, Fortune, what you me deny:
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through Which Aurora shows her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns by living stream at eve."¹

To the inspiration thus found by the artistic soul in the appeal of nature to its feelings and its individuality were essential a quiescence of enjoyment and a contentment of the spirit, able to bear the mind aloft from the grovelling and the little; to be full, the mind must at the same time be calm. The retirement, quiet, and tranquility found with nature must produce a soothing emotion, to silence all confusing passions. Rousseau "waxed tender even to shedding tears" in woodland scenes, and saw always in them something "sweet and sad, *reflection upon which softened his heart"² while Hazlitt, in writing as in painting found that " the moment he looked Nature in the face, he was at peace with his own heart; he could resign himself into the hands

1. On the Jealousy and Spleen of Paity.

2. Reveries, La Seconde Promenade.

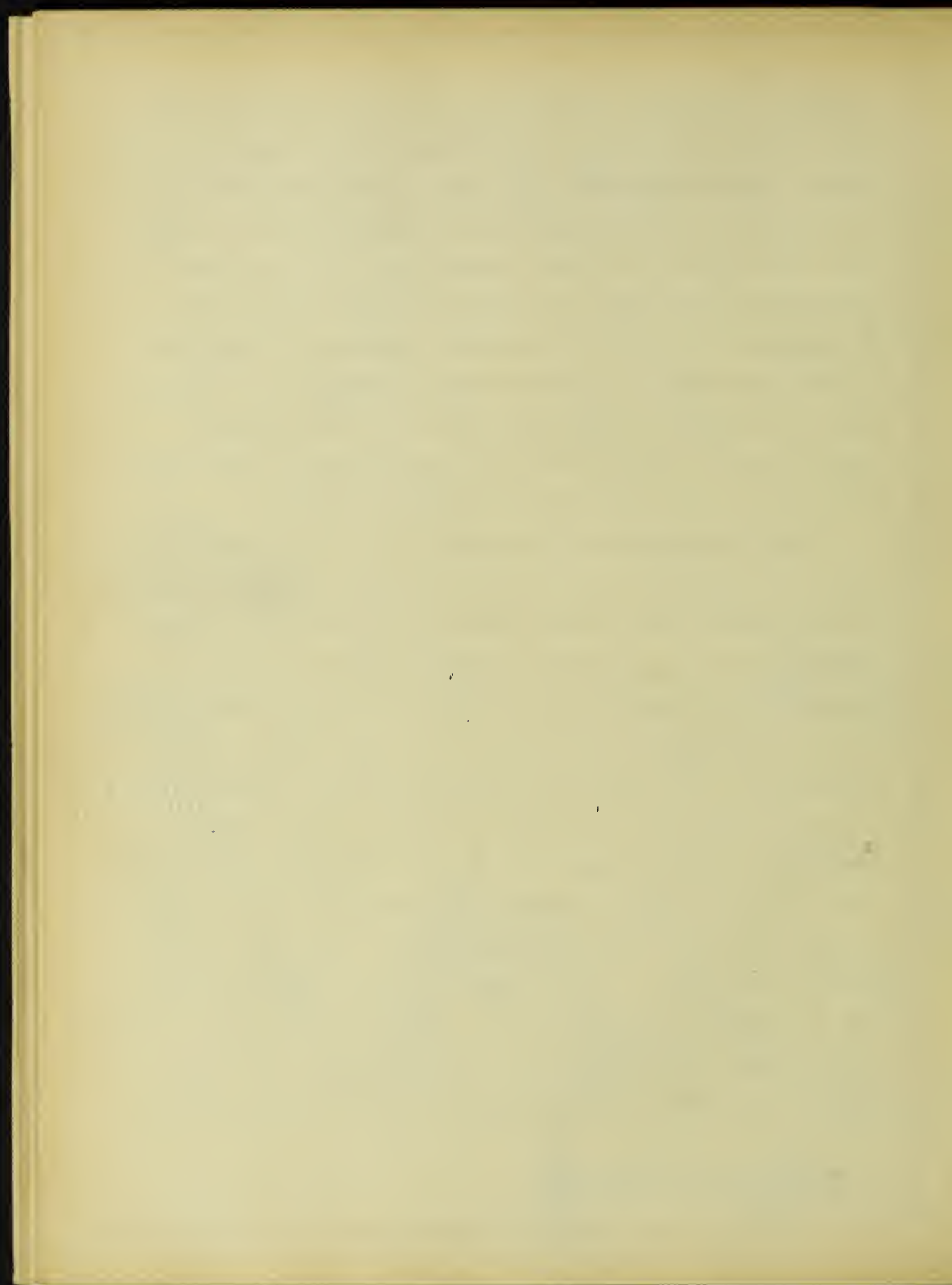
The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The second part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The third part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The fourth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The fifth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The sixth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The seventh part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The eighth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The ninth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom. The tenth part is devoted to a detailed discussion of the problem. It is shown that the problem is of great importance in the theory of the structure of the atom.

of her greater power, with the simplicity of a child, and the devotion of an enthusiast, to study with joy her manner and with rapture taste her style." This repose arose largely from their association of natural objects with the recollections of childhood, -the birthtime of their fondest hopes, their pristine illusions and enthusiasms, and their brightest expectations. To aging Hazlitt, hopeless and almost friendless in London, as to poor mad Rousseau at Bienne, fancying that all his acquaintances were leagued to defame his character, the philosophic touch of nature softened the aching recollection of recent woes with pictures of a time when all was airy and glowing.

Here Nature appealed most nearly to the innate egotism of each man. Here Rousseau, in his Confessions and Reveries, gave to her treatment that intimate subjective appeal which has been perpetuated through all French literature since, through Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and de Musset to our own time. And here Hazlitt introduces us most intimately to those years in which, having lost all the confiding expectation and the leaping raptures of youth, he felt that the world had become a dull blank.

^IRemark¹ the shining trunks and slender branches of the birch trees, waving in the idle breeze; or a pheasant springs up on whirring wing; or I recall the spot where I once found a wood-pigeon at the foot of a tree, weltering in its gore, and think how many seasons have flown since it left its little life in air. Dates, names, faces, come back--to what purpose? Here I can saunter for hours, thinking to strike off into some less trod-

1. The Pleasures of Painting.



den path, yet hesitating to quit the one I am in, afraid to snap the brittle threads of memory." He speaks repeatedly of his intense love for the waving forests that crowned the heights of Norman Court, a love springing from the mere fact that as a boy he had wandered in them. Every scene upon the various brief journeys of his later days brought up its recollections. "The morning was wild, calm, and pleasant," he says on the occasion of one such;¹ "it was autumn--the scattered gold of the yellow leaves was strongly contrasted with the dark green spiral shoots that skirt^{ed} the road; the sun shone faint and watery, as if smiling his last: Winter gently let go the hand of Summer, and the green fields, wet with the mist, anticipated the return of spring. At the end of a beautiful little village Dulwich College appeared in view.... Sweet are the studies of the schoolboy, delicious his idle hours! Fresh and gladsome is his waking, balmy are his slumbers, book-pillowed! Pain turns smiling from him, and sorrow is only a softer kind of pleasure. See him there, the urchin seated in the sun, with a book in his hand, and the wall at his back! He has a thicker wall before him--the wall that parts him from the future. He sees not the archers taking aim at his peace; he knows not the hands that are to mangle his bosom. Come, let us exchange places-----!" Again and again--so often that we find few of his more vivid moods and experiences undescribed--Nature, her smiling sun, her high-drifting clouds, her sighing groves, inspires him to a sentimental self-revelation that resembles nothing in the world so much as Rousseau's. It was his tribute to her appeal to his inmost

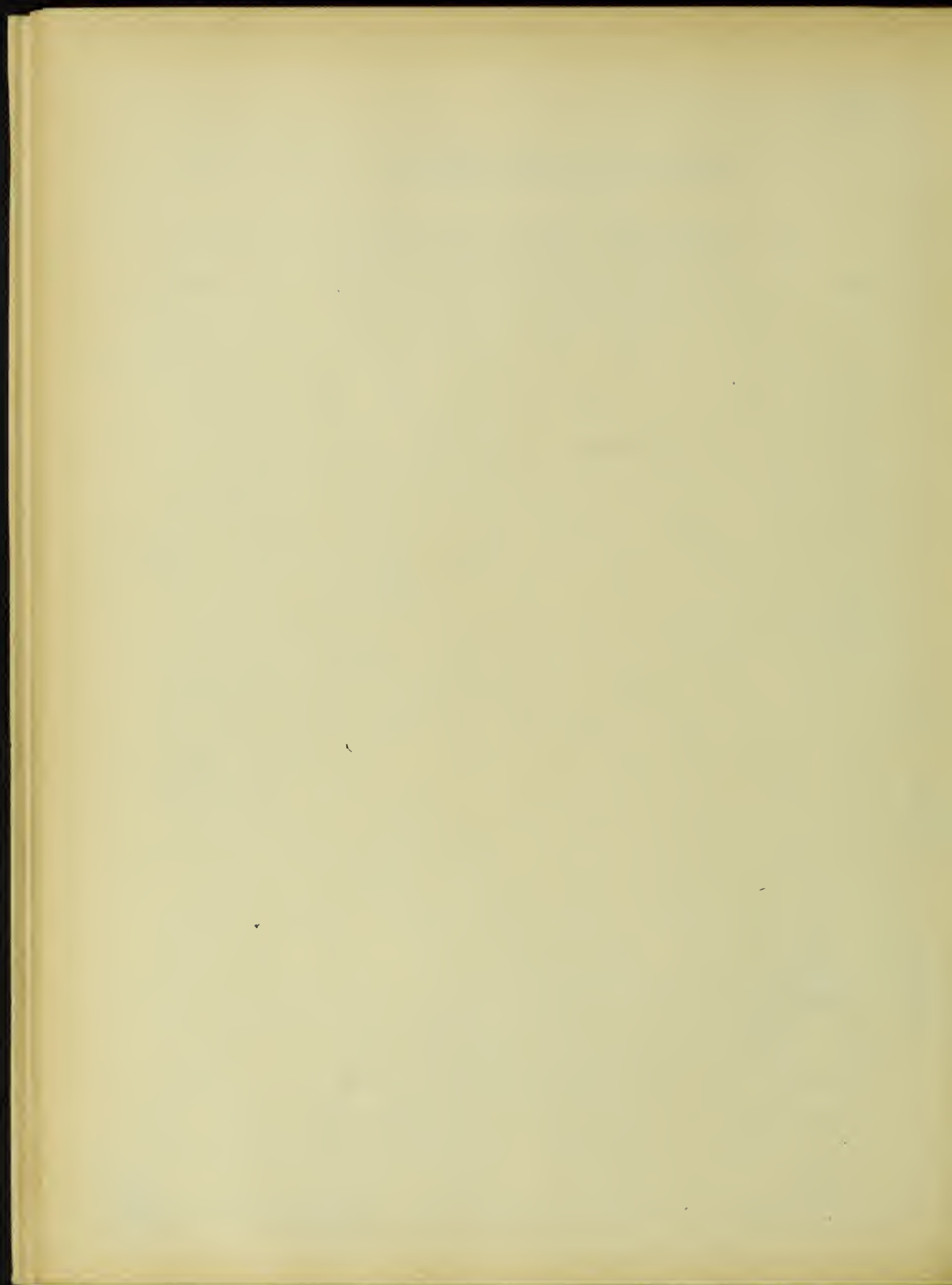
1. The Dulwich Gallery.



self.

Chapter 4; Literary Egotism.

Yet despite these various evidences of its existence, Hazlitt's egoism was lit be more than inconsiderable in amount, and so native in flavor that its quality cannot often be ascribed to outside influences. He himself said that Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Cellini were the three writers who felt their own being most powerfully and exclusively: he certainly cannot be named in the same breath with any of the three; and he was so far from admiring most aspects of egoism that in the last moments of his literary career he stated his earnest conviction that no author could successfully support such an artistic thesis as he had chosen if he did not believe that his cause and his purpose were far greater than himself. Nevertheless, the very earnestness of his sensibility to truth made his ideas, and the moods and emotional processes which led to them, of the deepest moment to him. In interpreting an author, he threw off the cloak of the formal and impersonal critic, and read into his discourse upon the work in hand all that identity in sympathy, in thought, and in experience which he could muster for the occasion. External nature, food, music, odors, objects of all sorts, in his works are ever connected with striking and picturesque passages of his life. There is probably not a like nor a dislike, a care or a sorrow or a joy which the more glowing moments of his literary inspiration have not led him to strip bare and to record. These personal desires, enthusiasms, and regrets are always subordinate to the subject in hand; they never form, ^{with} as Rousseau, the delib-



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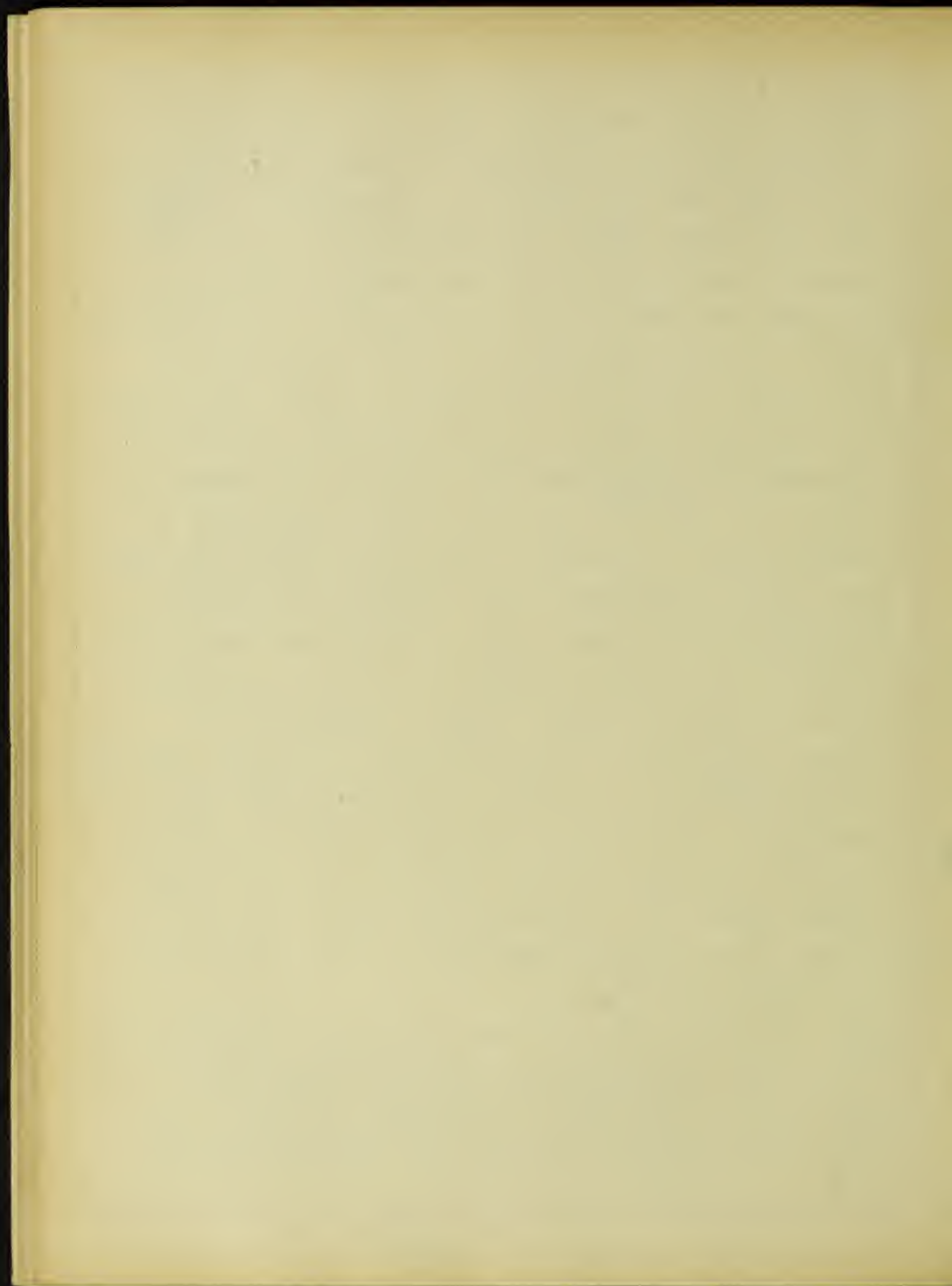
erately designed pièce de résistance. Indubitably they scarcely fail to give us the same well-rounded impression of his personality, breathed in the same sad and sentimental spirit; but if their effect is Rousseauistic, their intent was very different. The one exception to this statement is the *Liber Amoris*, an autobiographical outburst, passionate and unreserved, and obviously mothered by the *Confessions* and fathered by the *Nouvelle Heloise*: fortunately nothing else Hazlitt ever wrote shows the faintest resemblance to this mad interlude of outraged love.

The more normally introspective quality of Hazlitt's egotism may be seen exhibited in that famous description of Hamlet whose askant application to himself the world has never doubted; and here it most nearly approaches that of the Frenchman whose books are, in his own words, "all" *plein de ses affections d'âme*," and who by introducing the 'moi' into works of the mind left to the world a new legacy of Romanticism. It is in the same character as that of the Danish prince that Hazlitt repeatedly introduces himself: as "one who has become thoughtful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others; who has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection and been 'too much in the sun'; who has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists, rising in his own heart, and could find in the world before him only a dull expanse, with nothing remarkable left in it; who has known 'the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, and the scurns which patient merit of the unworthy takes'; to whom the universe seemed infinite and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who ~~goes~~ ^{goes} to a play to shove off, by a second remove, the evils of life



by a mock-representation of them." It is this melancholy introspection of the man, and not any theatrically insincere self-revelation, that savors of Rousseau. He plays no ^{lâ}nger part in his own works than Elia in Lamb's: but unlike Elia, he does not enter in a playful, gentle, and sometimes pathetic role, but as one moody, striking, and if sometimes tender, passionate in his tenderness. We remember him as the writer of the rude and forcible letter to Gifford; as he who described the tribulations of his love affairs in "Advice to a Schoolboy"; as one who, never losing the courage of his endeavors, was yet unhappy and a misanthrope. "A spider," he says, in *The Conduct of Life*, "the meanest creature that crawls or lives, has its mate or fellow; but a scholar has none. For myself, I had courted thought, I had felt pain; and Love turned away his face from me. And as my frail bark sails down the stream of time, the God of Love stands on the shore, and as I stretch out my hands to him in vain, claps his wings and mocks me as I pass." There is something in this picture, although not in the literal import of the words, which reminds us of Rousseau, confessing to Malesherbes before his departure for Geneva that he loved man most when he saw him least, and believing in his last days that he had not a single faithful friend. "In the spring," says Hazlitt in *The Love of Nature*, "I have always felt sweet hopes and happy wishes--which have not been fulfilled."

Ever and anon, as in *The Past and Future*, we meet him as "one who has long cherished hopes and met bitter disappointment," whose "life has passed away in the feverish irritation of pursuit and the certainty of failure." His peevishness sometimes

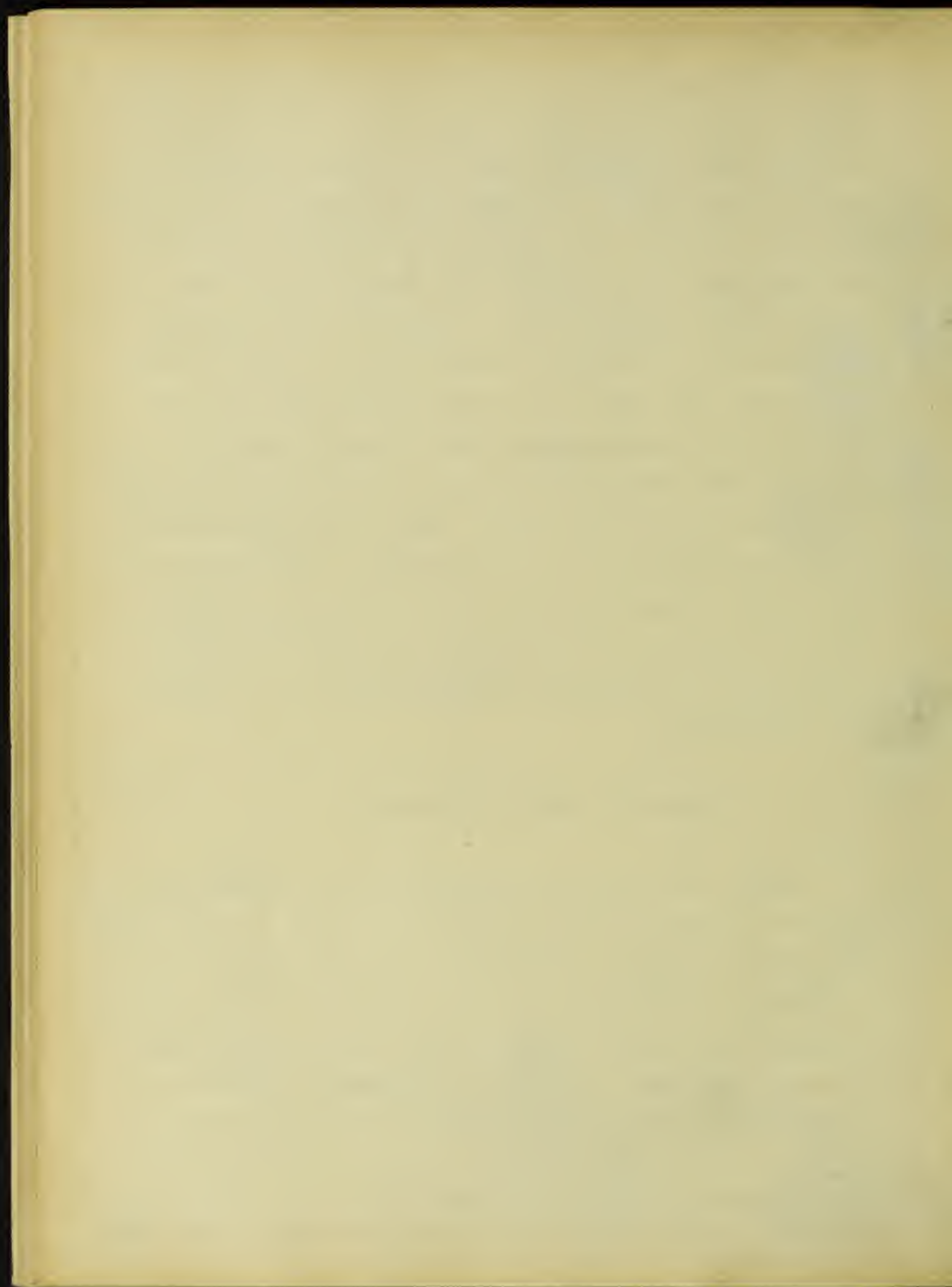


combined with his pessimism to give him the misanthropy of Jean-Jacques in the latter's most unbalanced period. "If I mentioned my favorite game of racquets, there was a general silence, as if this was my weak point. If I complained of being ill, it was asked why I made myself so. If I said an actor had played a part well, the answer was, there was a different account in one of the papers. If an allusion was made to men of letters, there was a suppressed smile. If I told a humorous story, it was difficult to say whether the laugh was at me or the narrative. The wife hated me for my ugly face; the servants because I could not always get them tickets for the play, and because they could not tell exactly what an author meant".¹ This is mere querulousness, and the fine natural pride of the man seldom let his spirit so lick the dust. Like Jean-Jacques in his healthier periods, he was wont to ascribe his misfortunes to the constitution of the universe--to the philosophy of human existence--not to forces petty and personal.

Chapter 5; Natural Benevolence.

Nothing more logically bridges over the gap between the subjective and the objective expression of similar tendencies and sensibilities in Hazlitt and Rousseau than their common allegiance to the ethical doctrine of the natural benevolence of man; for this allegiance was rooted in their strongest natural and personal feelings, while from it sprang their fundamental conceptions of democracy and hence their reformatory and revolutionary

1. Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority.



attitude toward the main social and political questions of the day. In the writings of neither is it given any considerable space, but its importance cannot therefore be minimized. With both it represented the application of sentiment and feeling to their theories of the equal relations of man with man; and so became the basis of their whole-hearted resentment of tyranny and inequality.

Those two entire schools of writers who dominated French literature in the generation preceding Rousseau, and English literature two generations before Hazlitt, had sturdily maintained the doctrine of self-interest. In the select field of belles lettres the essays of Montaigne and Pope, the maxims of Rochefoucauld, the dictionary of Voltaire, the tragedies of the morally oblique Stuart dramatists, and the satires of Swift, La Bruyère, and the Johnsons had been given an impulse in both countries by the metaphysical support of the thesis of innate selfishness, for the philosophers Hobbes, Bayle, Helvetius, Price, Bolingbroke, and Paley had long expounded it almost unchallenged. The temper of an age of political and social conservatism was consonant with it, and it was interwoven into the very fabric of the social structure which the revolutionaries of the dawning age wished to reform.

This specious theory Rousseau openly combated from his burning love of mankind, abstractly considered, and his impugnable belief in the basic virtue of an estrayed humanity; while Hazlitt, although led undoubtedly by the bias of his feelings, spun a philosophical support for his belief, and rested it (at least ostensibly) upon logic, as did also Burke and many others of the closest English thinkers of the time. Rousseau



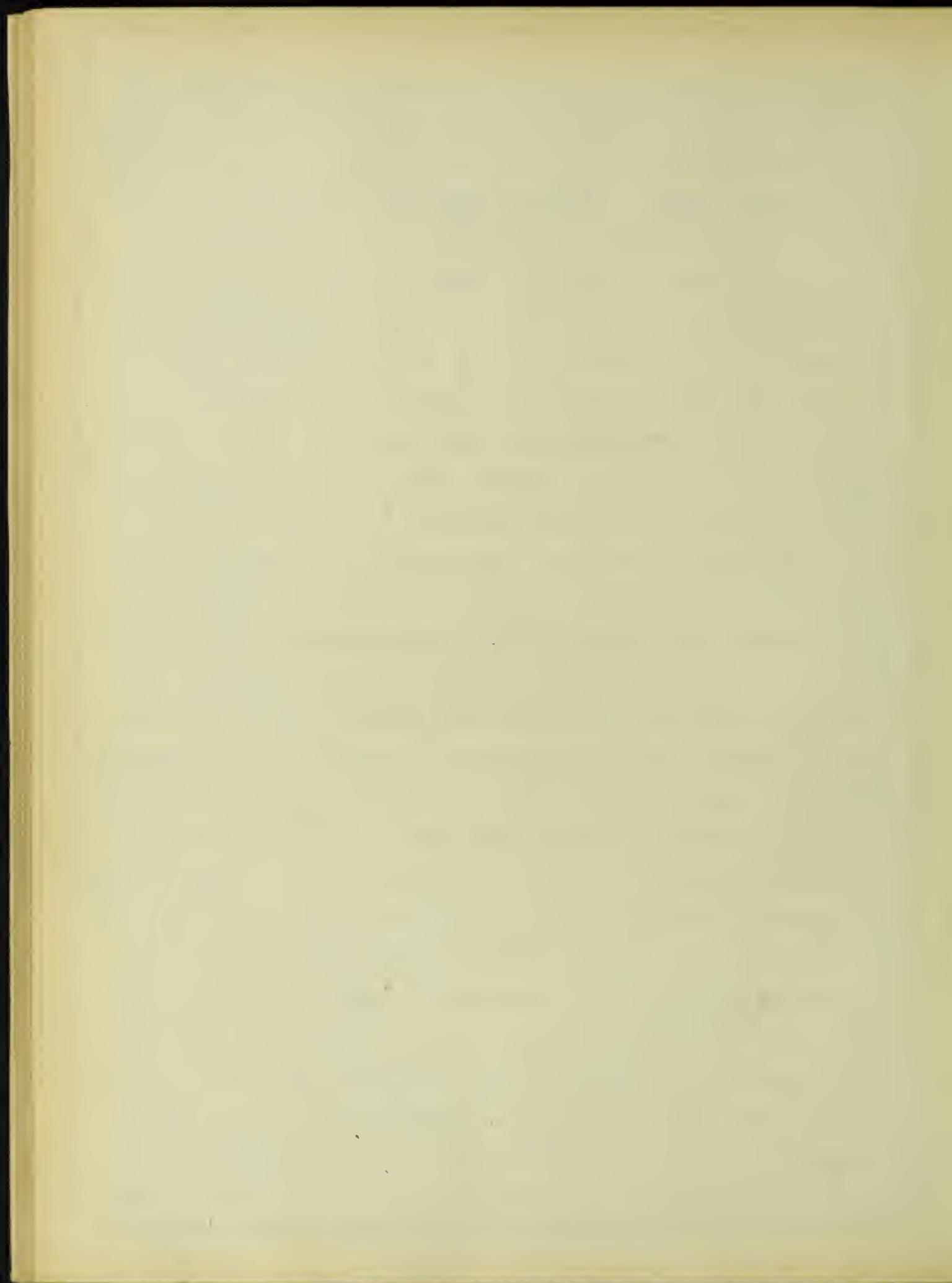
is by no means consistent in his view of human disinterestedness; he fluctuates in it as he fluctuates in his likes and dislikes of humanity; and it is only in his higher and finer moments that he eulogizes the altruistic in man. This was of course the inevitable result of removing the subject from the abstract plane of philosophy; in moments of petty irritation with his fellows the generalized truth suffered from the necessity of applying it to the unworthy individual. Similarly, when Hazlitt looks at man in the concrete,--when he abuses country people for selfishness or insensibility, or the Irish for their want of consistency and good faith, or the French for their volatility,--he does not lose himself in Rousseau's higher feeling. He sees clearly that "men are not governed by extreme motives"--that "if perfect virtue were necessary to common honesty, fair-dealing, and propriety of conduct, there would be nothing but swindlers and blackguards in the world."¹ Nor can he, in the utmost blaze of his feelings, see men as wholly fraternal, with natural benevolence and altruism rooted in a pervading and angelic virtue; he accounts for these qualities more logically. He believes that general benevolence is the result of a slow development in the maturing man; and that this development arises by the reasonable and conscious inhibition, in every separate action of life, of selfish habits and tendencies previously existent. There is a narrower and more exact psychology in this than in Rousseau's theory that natural benevolence arises from a rational extension of that generous feeling which the youth instinctively has for his immediate associates into a glowing altruism applicable to the whole wide world of fellow-beings. In the latter view the doctrine of benevolence results

1. Reply to Malthus.



in an all-infusing spirit of world-comradeship and democracy, and is inspirational to a revolutionary and levelling theory of society. Upon his doctrine, dominated as it was by feeling, could be reared the tripartite temple of *Liberte'*, *Egalite'*, and *Fraternite'*; upon Hazlitt's little more than a cold code of individual morals.

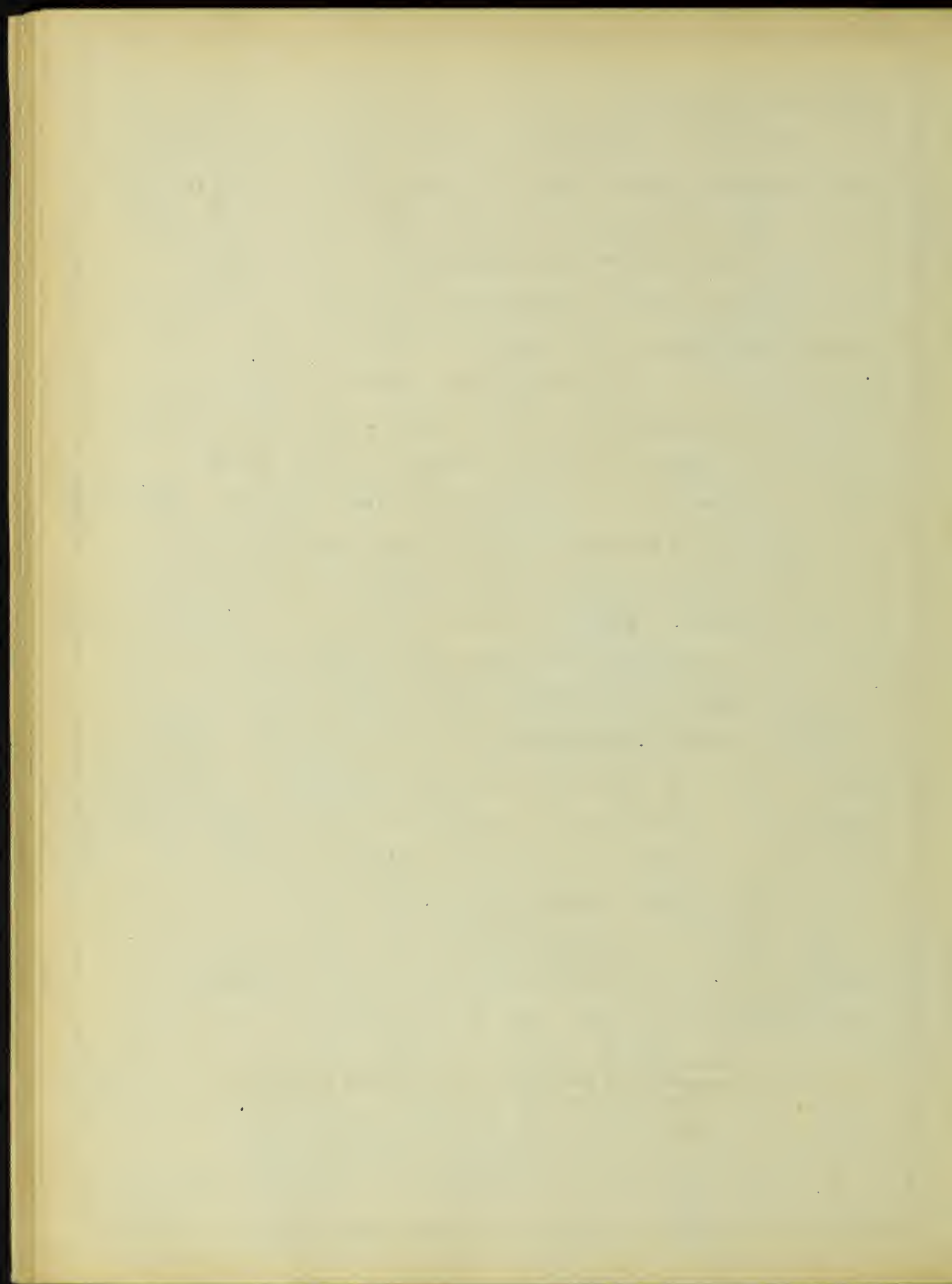
So it is that in stating his position Hazlitt repeatedly flies to Rousseau's enthusiasm for inspiration and comfort. It is under the spell of this inspiration that in his essay on "Self-Love" he breaks into his most impassioned appeal to the democratic instinct; while in *The Principles of Human Action* he lays bare, together with the outward differences, the deep inner sympathy between his own and Rousseau's doctrine. "The young man," he quotes from *Emile*, "feels his first kinship with humanity through those with whom he works and suffers, and like whom he thinks,-- whose nature is most like his own. It is only after reflection upon his own sentiments and those of others that he can come to generalize his individual notions under the abstract idea of humanity. Ainsi se forment les premiers liens qui l'unissent à son espèce." He himself observes that the force of previous habit is and always must be on the side of selfish feelings; but that "it is some consolation to think that the force of the habit we may oppose to this is seconded by reason, and the natural disposition of the mind, and that we are not obliged at last to establish generosity and virtue *lean* pensioners on self-interest." "The first lesson a boy must learn," he says again in *the Conduct of Life*, "is that there are other people in the world beside himself. True equality is the only true morality or true wisdom." Thus both Hazlitt and Rousseau teach that natural benevolence--in the one the inhibition of selfishness, in the other the extension of personal affections--is the



seed-bed of democracy.

The essay on Self-Love is a reply to Helvetius' attack upon Rousseau's statement that "to judge is not to feel, because we have a power of comparing objects, which cannot be the effect of physical sensibility", and beginning with a philosophical analysis of the question, progresses to the emotional defense of altruism and democratic feeling in an enthusiasm that is truly Rousseauistic. " Helvetius evidently considers a deliberate, calculating selfishness as the only rational principle of action, and treats all other feelings as romance and folly; while he would yet contend that the most disinterested patriotism, generosity, and love of fame are in the strictest sense self-love, because the pursuit of these objects tends to the gratification of the individual. After stating the sentiment of Rousseau that without an abstract and innate sense of right and wrong we should not see the just and true citizen consult the public good to his own prejudice, Helvetius goes on thus: 'To me, I reply, has ever been found to promote the public good when it injured his own interest. The patriot who risks his life to gain the public esteem and to deliver his country from slavery, yields to the feeling which is most agreeable to him.' Why should man not place his happiness in the exercise of friendship? What is become, suddenly, of that noble selfinterest which, identifies us with our country and our kind? Why should not the good man consent, as he often does, to the common good to his own hurt? We participate in the successes of our friends, it is true, but we participate also in their distresses and disappointments, and it is not always found that this lessens our regard for them."

In its application to the affairs of humanity at large, and



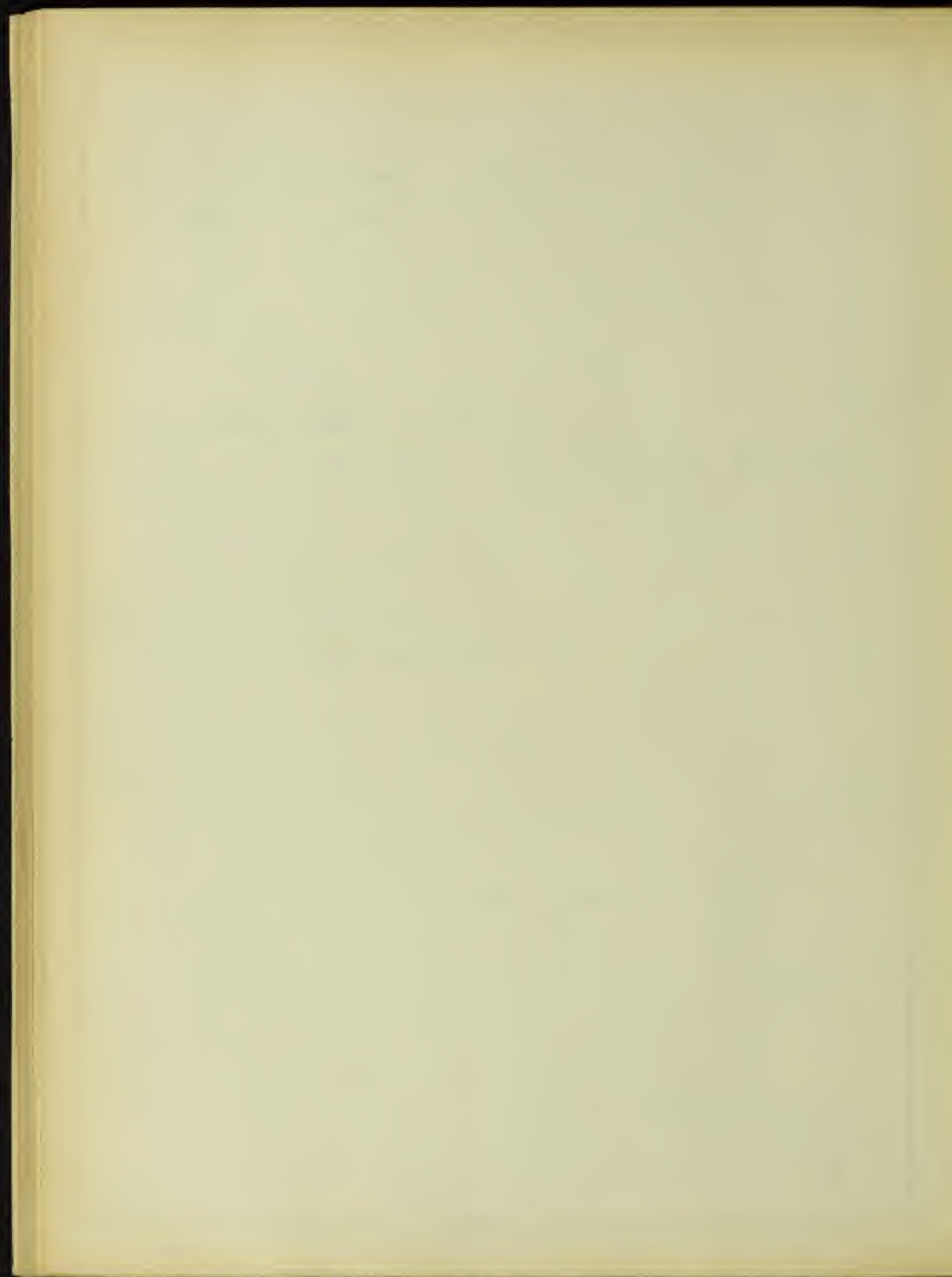
in especial to the relations of neighboring nations and peoples, the Political Essays abound with illustrations of the theory of natural benevolence. "It was said by an acute observer and elegant writer*", remarks Hazlitt in the last Illustration of Vetus, "that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice; so patriotism is nothing more than the love of liberty, and peace and social happiness. All patriotism not founded on truth and humanity is a painted sepulchre."¹ And in the previous paper, he had written, "It is only exclusive selfishness, exclusive patriotism, and exclusive philanthropy that are inconsistent with the order of providence," and had proceeded to attack Vetus for asserting any denial that the safety of England lay only in the destruction of revolutionary France to be 'a sucker from the poisonous root of universal benevolence'.² It was, of course, Rousseau who first made grow from this 'poisonous' root the spreading bay tree of freedom and enlightened government.

It may be observed parenthetically that in the course of his life Rousseau expounded three bases for the equality of man; first, its crushed and distorted survival from its once complete dominance over the primitive world, before the beginnings of civilization (The Two Discourses); second, the logically coöperative relation between men implied by the supposition of the Social Contract (The Social Contract); and third, the existence of a democratic and benevolent feeling between all the units of society (Emile and the Nouvelle Eloise). It is upon this third

* Rousseau-Letters.

1. 3-92

2. 3-89



basis for his dreams of human liberty that Hazlitt joins him. In the feelings of the human heart, they tell us, we will find a common and universal element, and a principle which will make all men recognize one another's equality. This third basis, of course, is the only one of the three that is demonstrable in fact, despite the consideration that its appeal is chiefly to the sentimentalist. It makes the washerwoman the equal of the duchess in all the essential endowments of the soul: "by nature men are neither kings, nobles, courtiers, nor millionaires--they are all born poor and naked, are all liable to the sorrows of life, its disappointments, its ills, its needs, its sufferings of every kind, and all are condemned at length to die."¹

When its relation to sentimentalism is pushed too far, however, as it is by Rousseau in his attempted inclusion of the animal kingdom, it becomes plain that its value is lost by too great extension. There are many relations of life in which the duchess is superior to the washerwoman, and many events and situations in which men forget that they were all alike born naked into the world. But as far as possession of the general rights of all humankind go, it is Hazlitt's and Rousseau's conception of feeling as their basis, and as the basis for their recognition, that gives them a common starting-point for all their democratic and revolutionary preaching. "Who but the slave" says Hazlitt, "does not despise the slave? Who but the tyrant does not hate the tyrant? The first of these looks upon himself as a God, upon his vassal as a clod of the earth, and instructs the world to do so. Let them be brought out of that dark cave of despotism and

1. Emile, Book 4.



superstition, and let a thousand other persons, who have no interest but that of truth and justice, be called on to determine between them, and the plea of the lordly oppressor to make a beast of his fellow-man becomes as ridiculous as it is odious.¹

Thus we are led, by this transition of the altruistic and democratic doctrine of natural benevolence, to that phase of the thoughts and feelings of each of these men which must forever constitute their greatest interest, as it once constituted their greatest importance, to the world,—their conception of liberty and their consequent revolutionary spirit. "Rousseau," said Hazlitt, "did more toward the French Revolution than any other man; for he identified the feeling of irreconcilable enmity to rank and privilege with the deepest yearnings of the human heart." Hazlitt himself caught the contagion of the enmity to rank and privilege, which by his time filled all the air, and became one of the numerous disciples who far outstripped Rousseau in their zeal to overturn established systems. His first non-metaphysical publication, written under the stimulus of Coleridge, was "Free Thoughts on Public Affairs". He hated nothing more than the oppression of monarchy, and reposed his personal interest in nothing more deeply than in the welfare of the people, whom he believed beloved of God; the face of Napoleon became his sun and hope, and the Napoleonic bees 'the bountiful givers of honey and light and sweetness,' for Napoleon, placing his foot on 'the squat toad legitimacy,' was to him the People incarnate. In a transference of the feeling behind Rousseau's enthusiastic presages in 1760 of the bright reign of Liberty and Brotherhood, and that

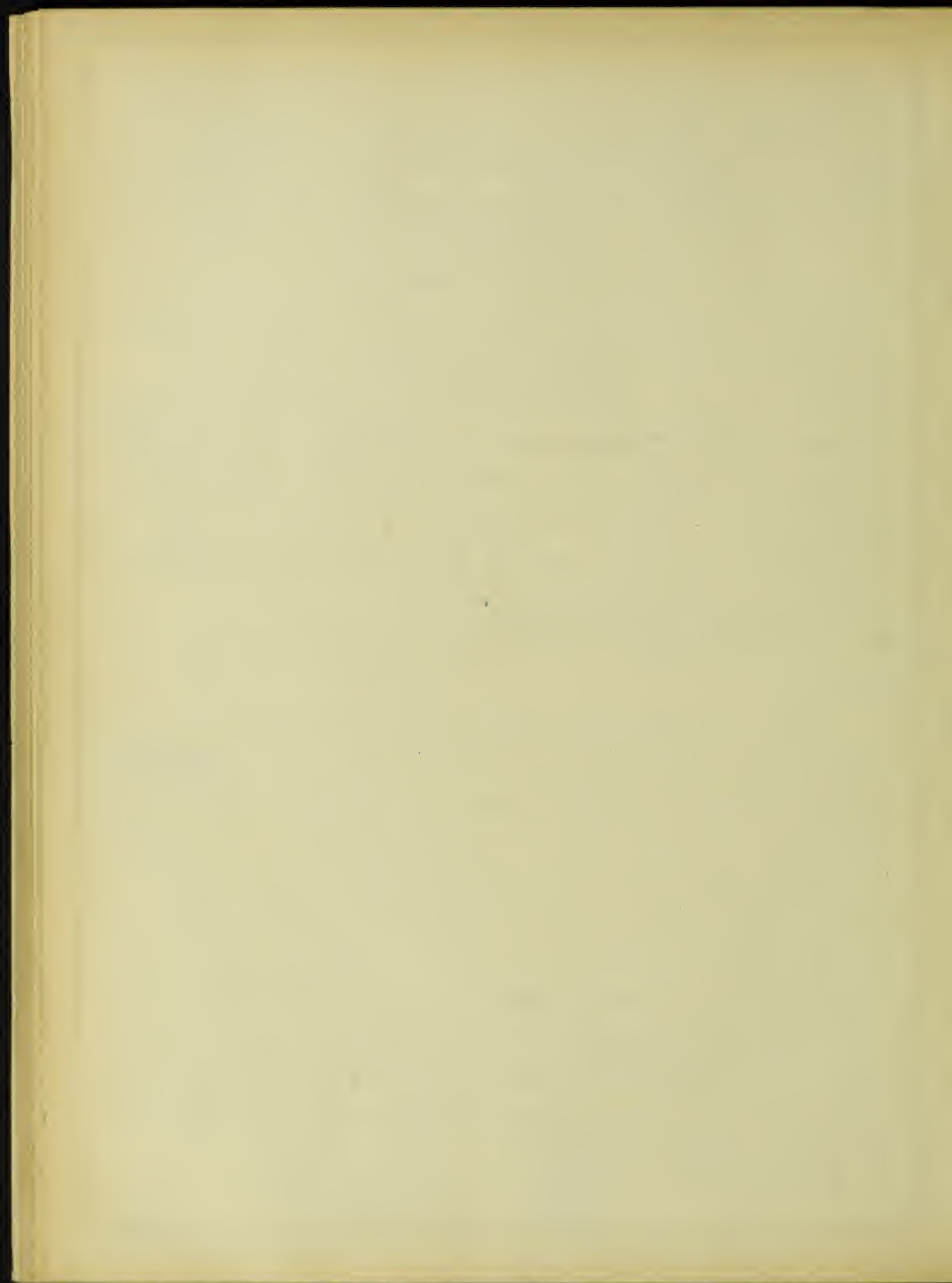
1. The French Revolution, vol. 1.



beneath the triumphant parades of Hazlitt in 1805 and his regretful musings, mingled with his surviving hopes, in 1820, we catch the clear keynote of all "the fierce music of Deliverance" which the history of those decades was writing--the crash of the falling Bastille, the clear and rhapsodic strains of the Marseillaise, the shaking tread of the Grand Army, the vive l'empereur of a far-expanding domain, and finally the roaring guns of Waterloo, that proclaimed only the relapse of the forces of Liberty into a more sanely progressive advance. "Freedom," said Rousseau in Emile, "is the greatest good." "The love of mankind," he wrote an anonymous correspondent in 1762, "is nothing but the love of justice. Je hais les grands: je hais leur estat, leur prejuge, leur petitesse, et tous leurs vices, et je les haïrois bien plus si je les méprisais moins." ¹

~~no~~ Forty years later the same hatred and the same contempt was Hazlitt's.

There is no doubt that Hazlitt read and analyzed every argument in the Discourses and the Social Contract, and carefully assigned to each its rational value; but it is more obvious in his work that he felt the glow of feeling which lay back of these performances, and which by this time had made electric the air of all Christendom. We have already quoted his conception of the justice of emotion as a motive to radical action. "What does not touch the heart, or come home to the feelings, goes for little or nothing. Knaves argue against the use of our senses and feelings in what concerns human nature because they know the refinements of the head are more easily got rid of than the suggestions of the heart." Lettres, Lettre a Monsieur M.

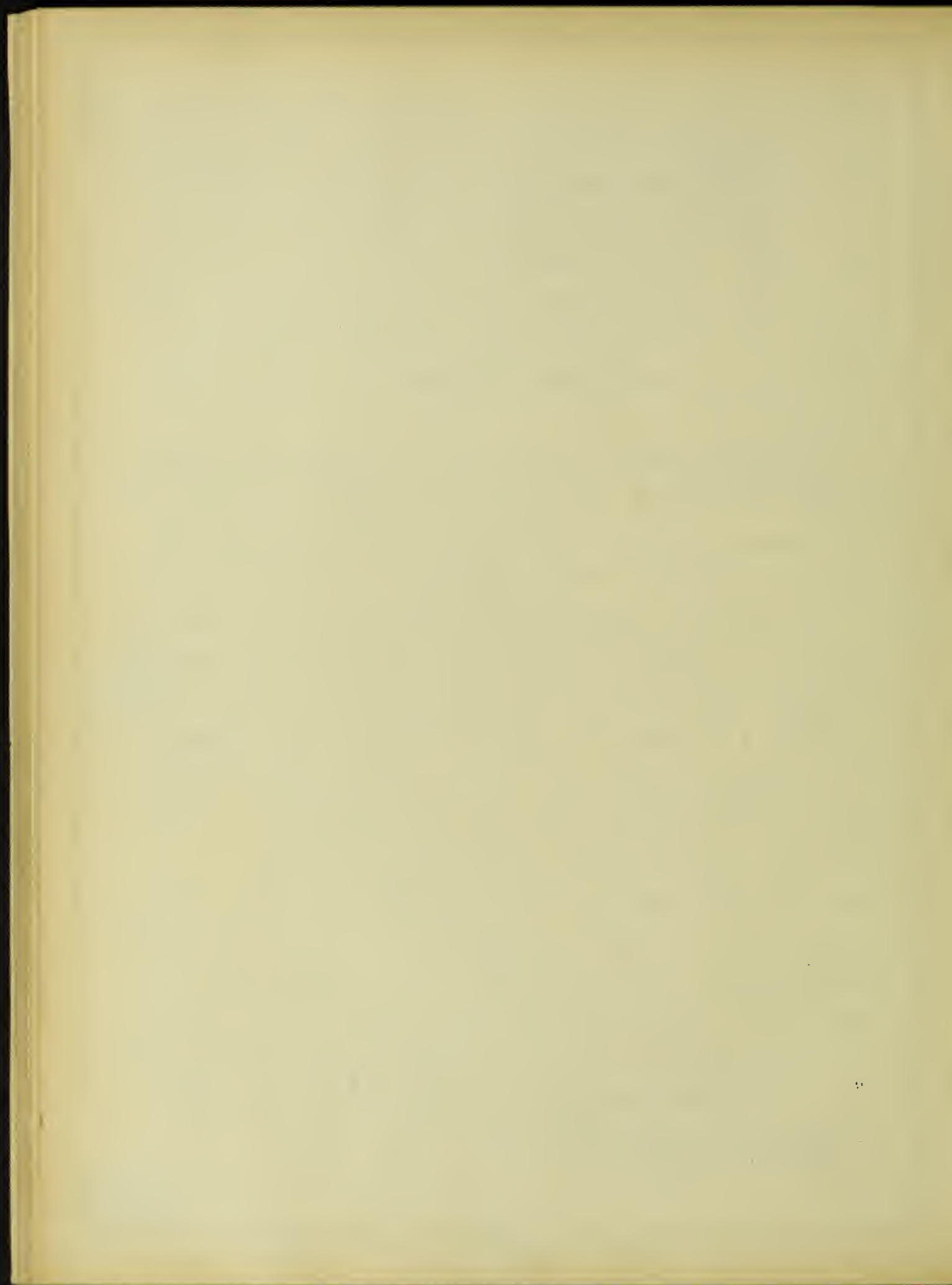


heart, and that a strong sense of injustice tells more against them than all the distinctions of the jurists. Would you tame down the glowing language of justifiable passion into that of cool indifference, of self-complacent skeptical reasoning, and thus take the sting of indignation from the mind of the spectator? Not till you have removed the nuisance by the levers that strong feeling alone can set at work. The evils that inflame the imagination and make the heart sick ought not to leave the head cool."¹

It was the fervor, not the logic, of Rousseau's eloquence, and the fire that burnt between the lines of his books, not the arguments, reasons, and deductions contained therein, that appealed to Hazlitt. Feeling schooled him in the same way that it schooled Danton, Desmoulins, and Robespierre; and he made his thesis and his application for himself. He announced himself as a member of the "school of Jacobinism founded by Rousseau, whose principle is converted into passion."² With a more unweary and unprejudiced spirit, with a heart more at one with the cause and more disinterestedly free from personal ambition, he could see better than the leaders of 1793 the rank injustice of a power that, while guilty of manifold abuses, yet called itself legitimate; it was this injustice that Rousseau had stated in the *Social Contract* and the *Discourses*. He had the same fundamental faith in the Commons and their ability some day, drawing back the curtain upon a millennial future, to realize the glorious ideals of equality, autonomy, and perfect good-feeling which

1. *Reason and the Imagination*, 7-53.

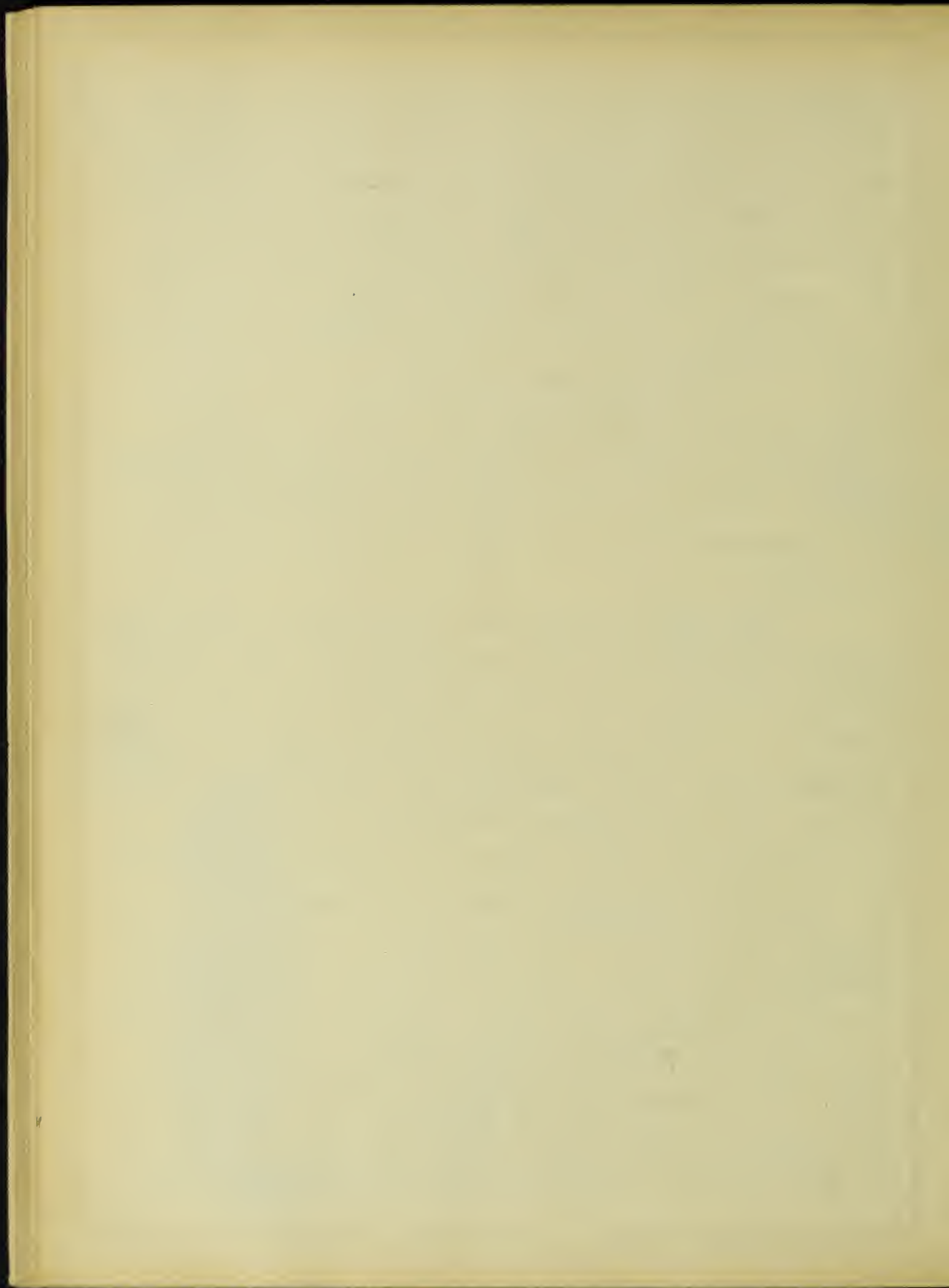
2. *Political Essays*.



animated the *Heloise* and the philosophical pictures of the ideal primitive life of the past. From his deep affinity with Pousseau may be traced every one of his political outbursts--his eulogies of Napoleon ("for whose consuming wrath against the thrones of Christendom," says Hazlitt, "let us glorify his name eternally"), his attacks on Royalty, on the theory of hereditary legitimacy, on war and taxation, and on limited suffrage and imperfect representation. It is not easy to trace this directly; it is rather a magnetic current between the two, whose subtle rush is the swifter and more galvanic for being invisible. To his enthusiasm, moreover, he added the fighting dash of a debating Englishman, and a willingness to enter the arena of practical political discussion.

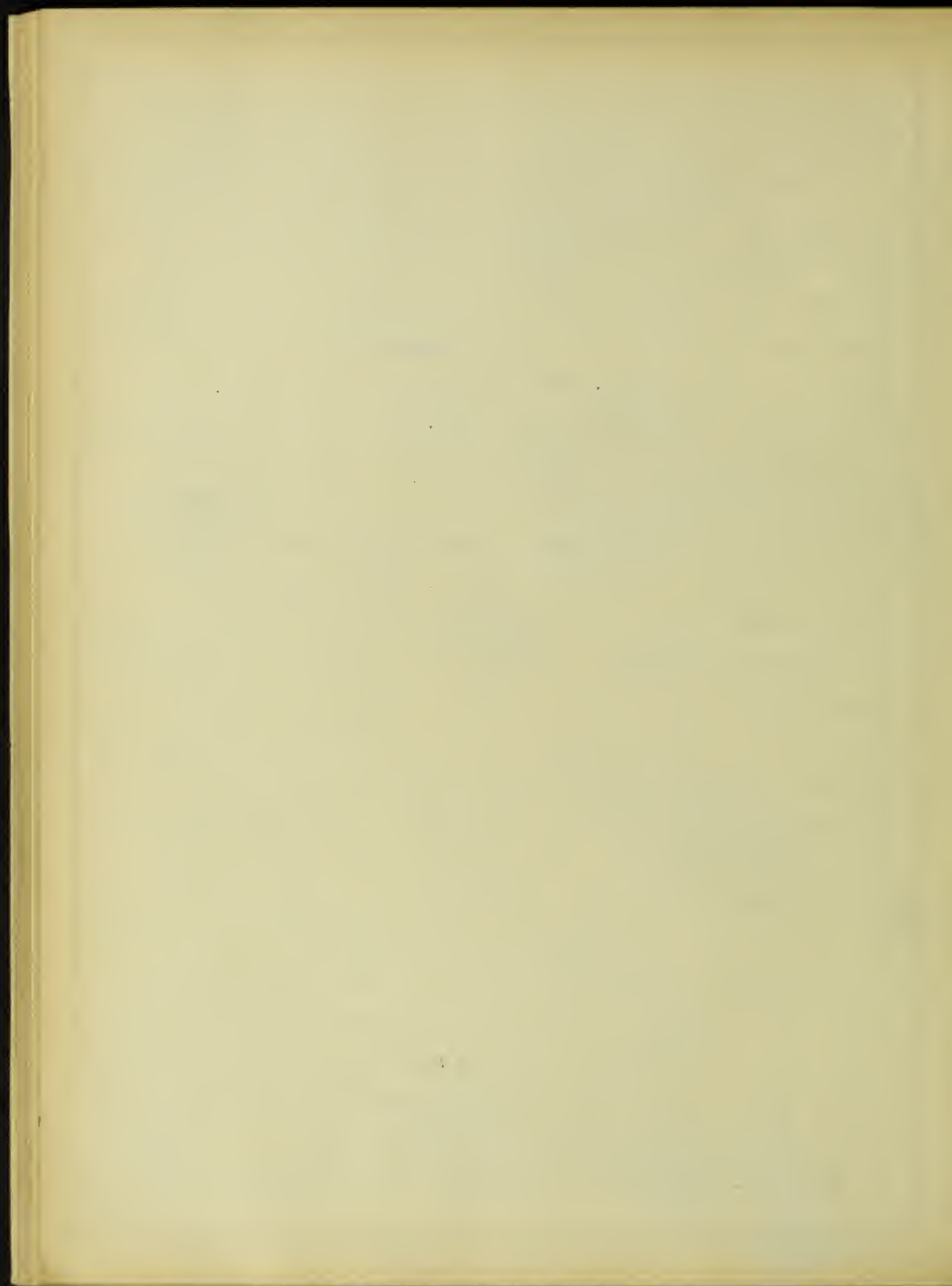
Hazlitt felt this spirit born in his breast in early youth--at the moment when 'to be young was very heaven'.--The generous and ardent feelings of the boy had all tended in the direction of Liberty, as is attested by a letter at the age of thirteen to his father, relating a controversy with some school-fellows on the subject. His impressionability was extreme. It was on his nineteenth birthday (1798), he tells us in the *Round Table*, that he sat down to a new volume of the *Eloise* at a Llangollen Inn.

"Much the same impression which the sight of the Queen of France made on Mr. Burke's brain sixteen years before the French Revolution, did the reading of the *Nouvelle Heloise* make on mine at the commencement of it; 'such is the stuff of which our dreams are made'." It was at this time that he met Coleridge, who fixed his determination to appeal through the *Free Thoughts* to England, in the name of liberty, independence, and patriotism, not to enter



upon a continental war of more interest and passion,' and the Rev. Joseph Fawcett, with whom he discussed Rousseau and Godwin.

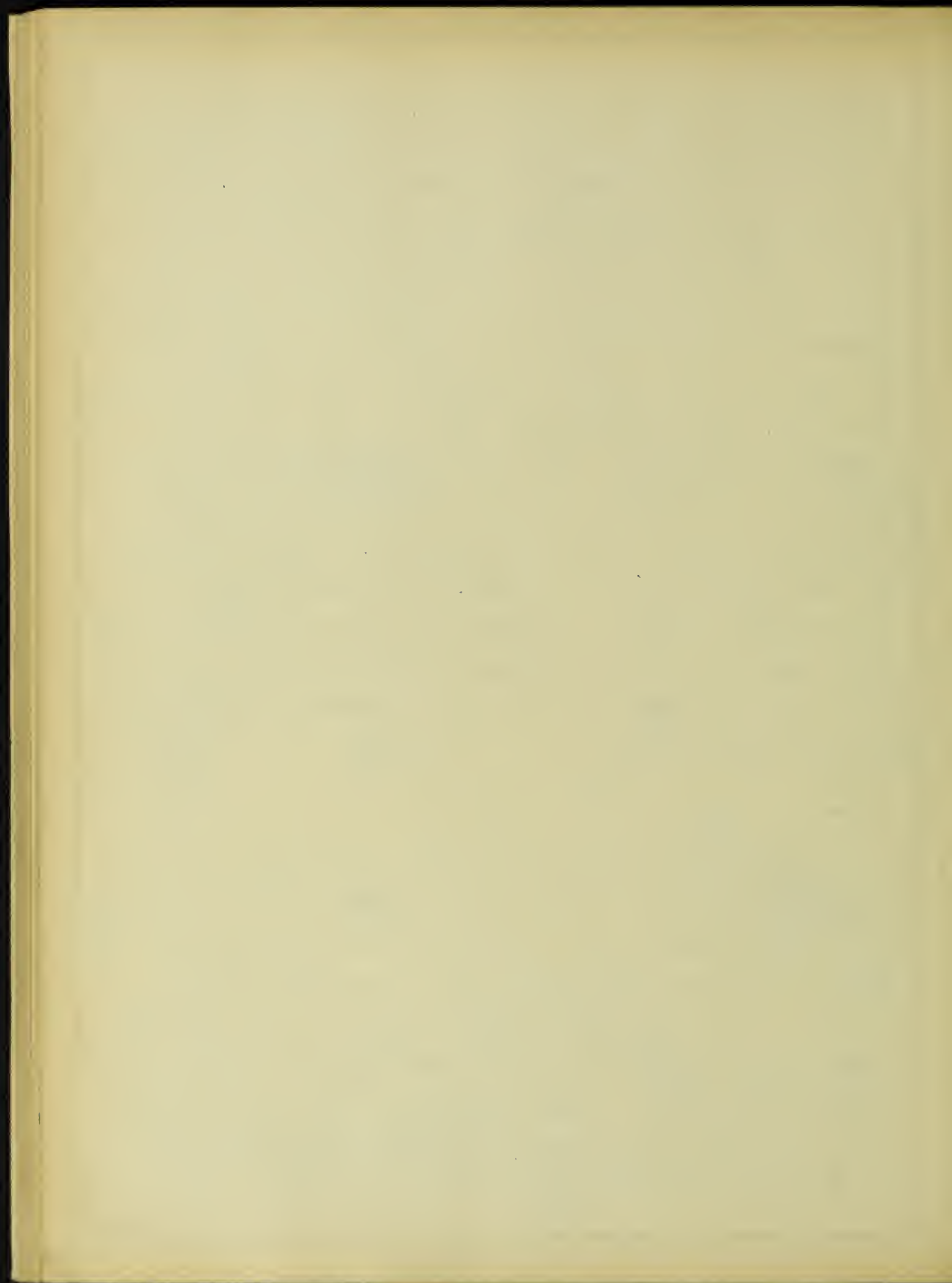
He was open to influence from every quarter. "The Robbers," he tells us in his lecture on the German drama, "was the first play I ever read; and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow. Were I to live much longer than I have any chance of doing, the books which I read when I was young I can never forget. "His sense of his own individuality and his love of mankind awoke together. The world of thought seemed in those days to feel a new youth, which perished when the weight of conservatism and reaction was once more rolled upon it, the sweet music of a universal deliverance rose temporarily from the old discords of hatred and tyranny. Not merely Hazlitt, and Coleridge with his 'adoration of the spirit of divinest liberty'; and Wordsworth and Shelley and Southey, but thousands of young English men everywhere, were smitten with that dream of a new social fabric. But in Hazlitt almost alone of the more famous figures were his convictions and enthusiasms strong enough later to hold him steadily to the belief that the cause of France and Napoleon were one with Liberty's. "For my part, I have started in life with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas!, to see the end of it. But I did not foresee this result. My sun arose with the first dawn of liberty, and I did not think how soon both must set. The new impulse to order given to men's minds imparted a congenial glow and warmth to mine: we were strong to run a race together, and I little dreamed that long before mine was set the sun of Liberty would turn to blood, or set once more in the night of despotism. Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt my-



self young, for with that my horses fell." He wrote this, in his essay on the Feeling of Immortality in youth, at a time when he felt that he could but "stagger on the few remaining paces to the end of his journey; put forth the one final effort; and be glad when his task was done."¹ Nothing could exceed his mortified rage and his desperation in the years following the exile of Napoleon. He wished to live to the day when the Bourbons should be again overthrown, and this he saw (June, 1830) two months before his death. Meantime, he poured forth venom and abuse at the 'enemies of humankind.' "The Temple of Despotism," he wrote to Southey, "has been rebuilt, like that of the Mexican God, with human skulls, and cemented with human blood." He even despaired of the future of the English people. "This was once a free, a proud, a happy kingdom, when under a constitutional monarchy it had just broken the chains of tyranny. Ah, John Bull! thou art not what thou wert,--thou art turned bully and coward!"² and he passed away a patriot uncomfited.

If we enter into the nature of the revolutionary bias of Hazlitt and Rousseau in detail, the most prominent of the qualities they hold in common is seen to be their natural individualism. Hazlitt flings back into Burke's teeth the statement, "Once a radical, always a radical," with the defiant admission that "the adept in this school does not so much consider the political injury as the personal insult. This is the way to put the case: to set the true revolutionary leaven, the self-love which is at

1. Lectures on the English Dramatists.



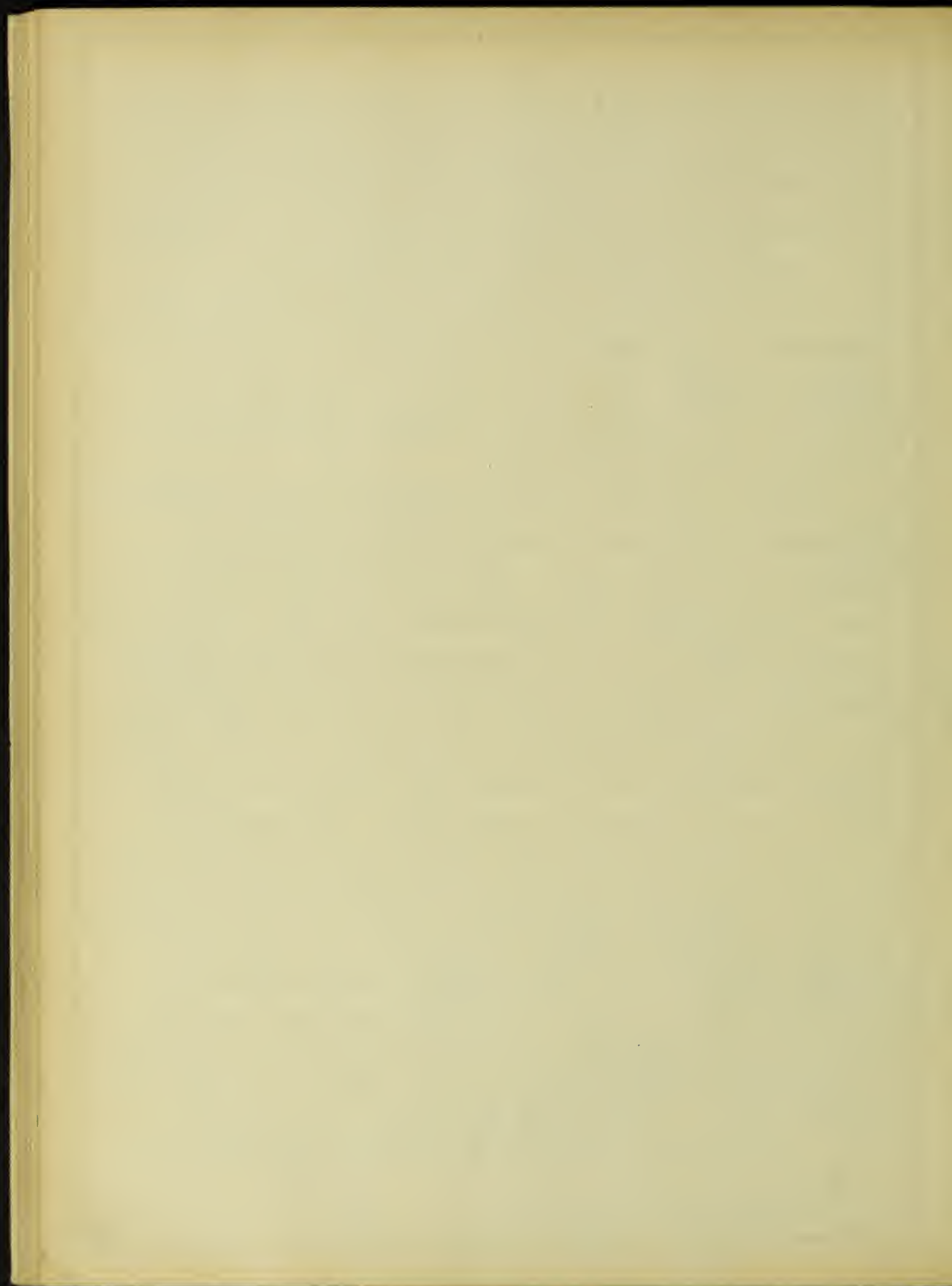
the bottom of every heart, at work, and this was the way in which Rousseau put it. It then becomes a question between man and man, which there is but one way of deciding."¹ He feels that love of liberty springs from an accentuation of the personal in each man; and this, we must in all candor allow, is the finest basis for democracy. To respect all others and their rights from warmth of self-respect; to be so sensible of what constitutes manhood in oneself as to insist upon it for all men; to love mankind from self-love, as Rousseau preached and Hazlitt did, is a height of sentiment truly noble.

Hazlitt tells with particular relish the story of the Prince of Hanover, passing down the strand and doffing his hat to everyone, high or low, whom he met; until he reached the station of a well-known mendicant crossings-sweeper. The sweep lifted his hat and bowed humbly, as all the pedestrians had done; but the Prince swept covered by, deigning only to present him with a half-crown fee. This Hazlitt triumphantly cites as proof of a defect in the ethical sensibilities of the royal scion, blinding him to the common essence of humanity in every subject. He himself felt strongly the personal pride that viewed the man as the gold, and the rank but the guinea's stamp, and this he was willing to make a basis for the general quarrel of mankind—one in which the "rights, freedom, hopes, and happiness of the whole world were embarked." Nothing angered him more than that many "could see with little concern the dignity of their common nature prostrate, trampled upon or mangled before the brute image of power."²

In Rousseau the same feeling held sway. His sense of his

1. Political Essays.

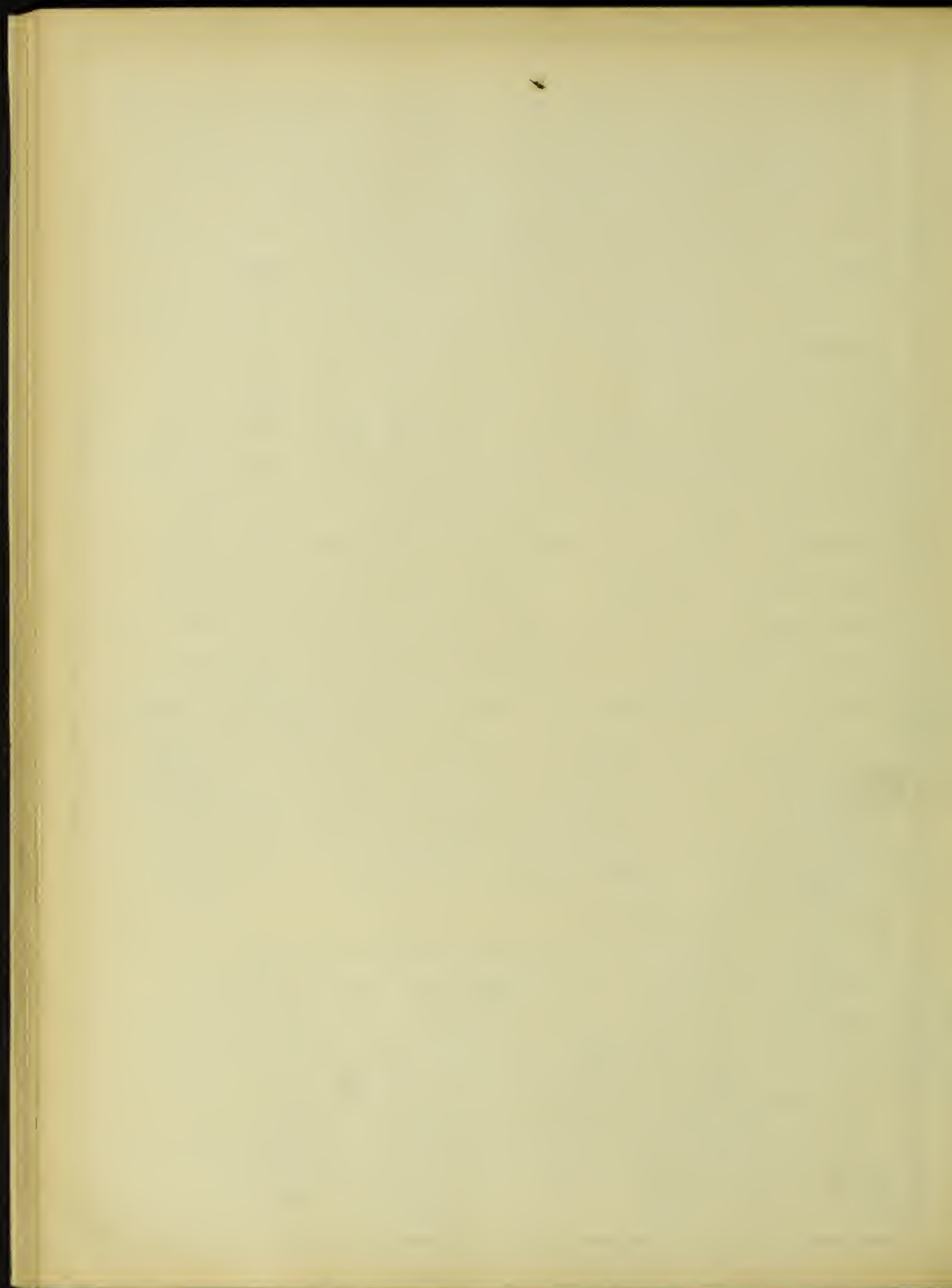
2. On the Spirit of Partisanship.



own personality was so great that in his own unhappiness he beheld all mankind in chains. As Hazlitt remarks to Northcote, "It was the excess of his own egotism, and his utter blindness to everything else, that found a corresponding sympathy in the conscious feelings of every human breast, and shattered to pieces the pride of rank or circumstance by the pride of internal worth or upstart pretention. When Rousseau stood behind the chair of the master of the chateau of-----, and smiled to hear the company dispute about the meaning of the motto of the arms of the family--then was first kindled the spark that can never be quenched, then was formed the germ of that strong conviction of the disparity between the badge on his shoulder and the aspirations of his soul--the determination, in short, that external situation and advantages are but the mask, and the mind is the man, armed with which he went forth conquering, and overthrew the monarchy of France and the hierarchies of earth. Till then, birth or wealth or power were all, though but the crust that envelops man; and what there was in man himself was never asked. Rousseau was the first who held the torch to the hidden chambers of the mind of man; henceforward, mind, thought, feeling, were a new element,-- a fourth estate in society. * "

* Note: DeQuincy and others in a self-contradictory way have attempted to persuade their readers that Hazlitt partook of Rousseau's anti-social spirit, and that it was this which moved him in his later political writings to radicalism and venom.

"After Hazlitt's desolating love-experiences," says De Quincy in his *Literary Portraits*, "the exasperation of his political temper grew steadily darker, fiercer, and more consistent. His life of



There is an important distinction here to be observed, in that from the nature of the social fabric in his country Rousseau was often (in his youth especially) subjected to real personal humiliations in his contact with those of proud birth of official station; while none of Hazlitt's many chagrins arose from exactly this source. At Turin with Count Gouven, at the seminary at Annecy, at Paris, at Geneva, Rousseau was made to feel that the conventions of rank imposed upon him a comparative depreciation. It was the ardor of a personal resentment, translated into applicability to the thousands about him, broadened into a thesis so universal that its petty impulse was forgotten, that the Discourses expressed. Hazlitt, it is true, was made to feel the malignancy of scribbling critics hired by the government, or truckling to its patronage, and with righteous indignation he has repeatedly denounced their character and their abilities; but he was never under the necessity of serving a lord as a footman, or giving place to a noble fop, and his love of democracy was as pure as it was burning. He was conscious in his defense of the rights of man of his independence of heart and his lofty manliness of soul, in exactly the same way that Rousseau was, but these qualities were never stung in him by the arrogance or impertinence of exact-

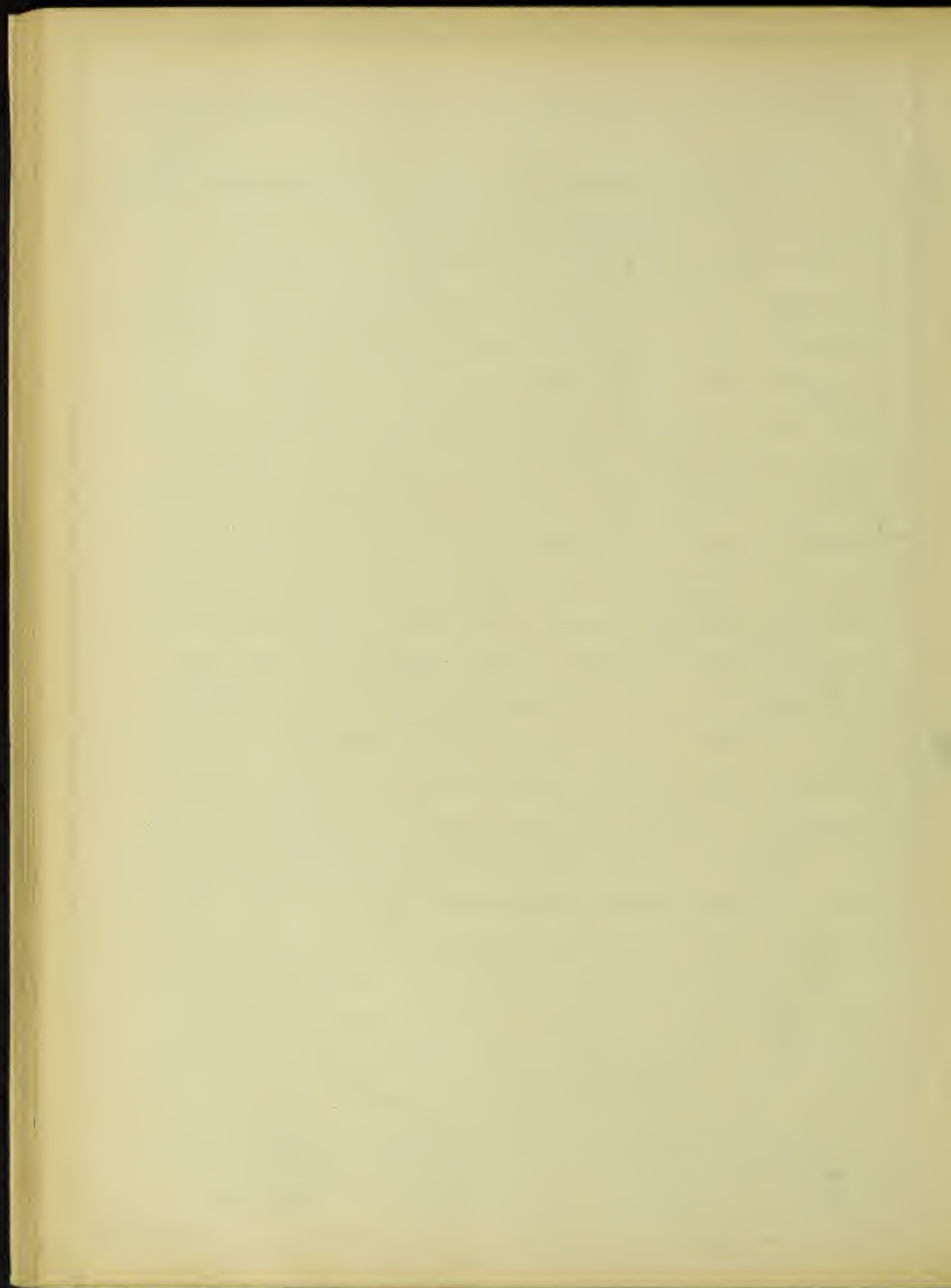
Napoleon was prosecuted as a reservoir that might receive all the vast overflows of his wrath, much of which was not merely political, but even morbidly anti-social. He hated with all his heart every institution of man and all his pretensions. He loathed his own relation to the human race." Hazlitt was indeed irritable, especially when in his declining days his misfortunes made him an object for the gibes and lies of his enemies—Gifford, Wilson,



ing superiors, and hence were never productive of merely spiteful outbursts.

Indeed, in his essay on The Look of a Gentleman Hazlitt has shown that he knew how to distinguish between the justice of a nobleman's pretensions to superiority in address and accomplishments, and the injustice of his pretensions to greater spirit and worth. The same man who objects to the Regent's slight upon a beggarly street sweeper descends with warmth upon the lordly appearance of Chatham, sitting in the House of Commons 'with his hat slouched over his forehead and a stoop in his shoulders, cowering over his antagonists like a bird of prey over its quarry,'^{and} upon the chivalrous gallantry in the air of the Marquis of Wellesley, "the star sparkling upon his breast and the garter bound tight below his knee." If he had a truly British sense of personal worth, he had no less a British reverence of the ornamental value of the arts which only the leisure class can cultivate. Yet at bottom he and Rousseau had alike the same sentimental and semi-egotistical basis for their democracy. This type of reformer, when all is said, is sufficiently rare. The progress of the great democracies of the world since the day of both has proven that those who cry "let the people rule" are generally either men of affairs with personal ambitions to satiate, or pure theorists who build their logic in accordance with the trend of the times, and left no voice of warning and change; for the one we have a Robespierrie or Gladstone or Roosevelt; for the other a Jefferson or Madison or Fiske. The sentimental advocates of democracy are a few single great figures, belonging

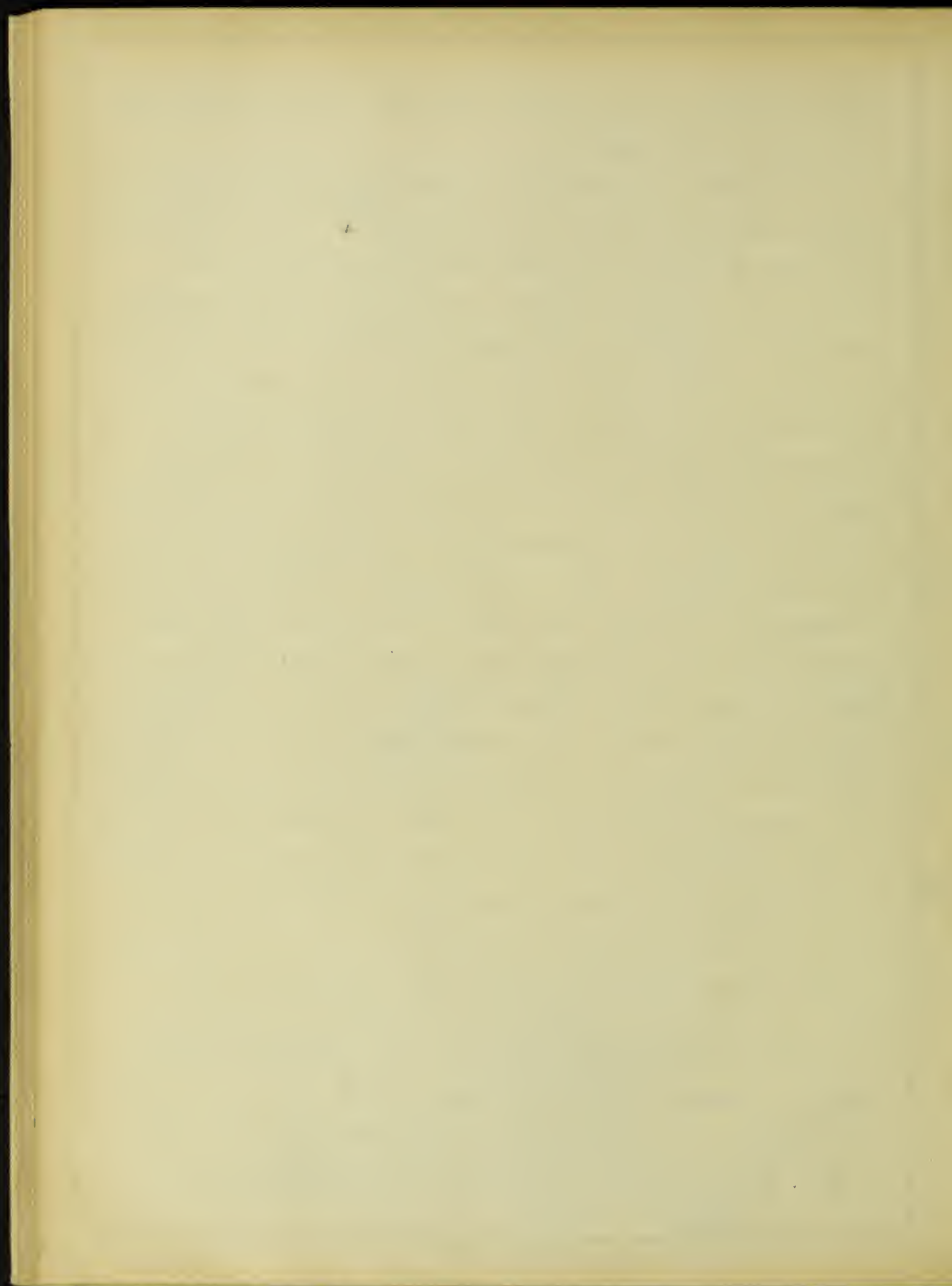
Lockhart, and the other reviewers ; but he was never anti-social



to the forefront of the movement, where they can move worlds with their pens or their eloquence.

It requires an extraordinary combination of enthusiasm for the abstract principle of democracy, and recognition of the rights of the many-headed multitude to compass Hazlitt's concrete radical doctrine; for the idea of popular sovereignty which he expresses leaves that of Rousseau in the Popular Contract as cold abstraction by contrast. When Rousseau wrote of the qualified equality of man he was thinking of the lay figures who had risen through his philosophical system from the state of nature to the hideously organized France of 1765; but when Hazlitt wrote of the political equality of man he was thinking of the warm beating heart of the whole English nation. "What is the People?" He answers in a burst of Ciceronian eloquence, with a fire of conviction, and a sense of the personality of the mass he is addressing that gounds his phrases who into poetry. "Millions of men like you, with hearts beating in their bosoms, with thoughts stirring in their minds, with wants and appetites and anxious cares, affections for others and a respect for themselves, and a right to freedom and a will to be free. And yet you would tear out this mighty heart of a nation, and lay it bare and bleeding at the foot of despotism; you would slay the mind of a country to fill up the dreary aching void with the old, obscene, drivelling prejudices of superstition and

in the way in which was the "afflicted and melancholy" Rousseau (Letter to Roquin, 1745), who ceased to despise men and to hate the mean-spirited only when he no longer saw them! Confessors, Bk. 6). Hazlitt was not so sensitive in his personal relations



tyranny; you would tread out the eye of Liberty like a vile jelly; you would make tyrant everything and the people nothing. The people is the hand, heart, and head of the whole community acting to one purpose and with a mutual and thorough consent. The will of the people necessarily tends to the general good as its end. In matters of feeling and common sense, the majority are in the right; in things requiring a greater strength of mind to comprehend them, the greatest power of understanding will prevail. Vox populi, vox Dei, is the rule of all good government."

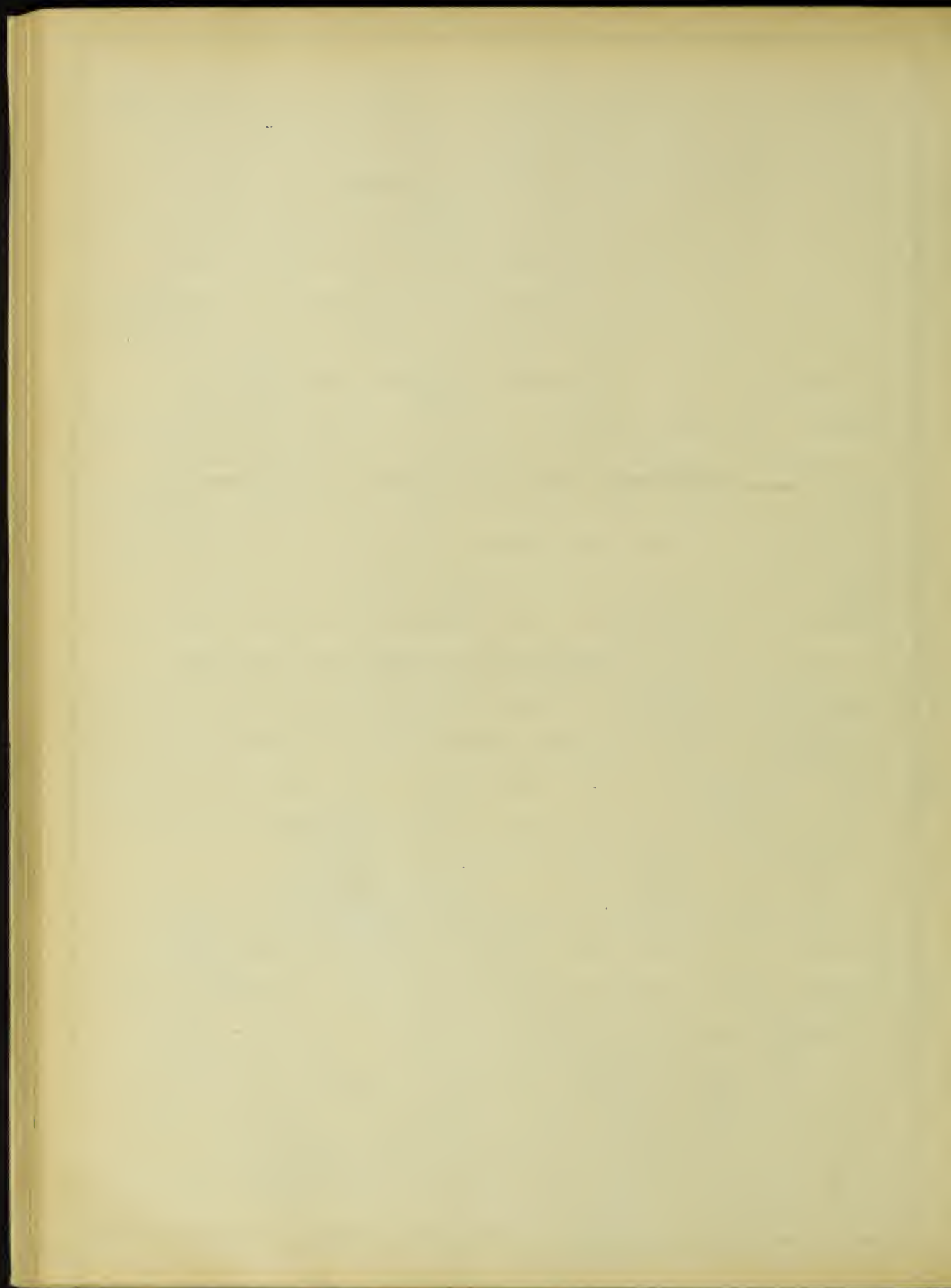
Upon this subject of the general will the conceptions of Hazlitt and Rousseau ^{were almost identical.} "Only the general will," says Rousseau, "can direct the forces of the state according to the object of its establishment, which is the common good."¹

"Why is the general will always right, and why do all desire constantly the happiness of each, unless it is because there is no person who does not appropriate to himself the word 'each', and who does not think of himself while voting for all? Equality of rights, and the notion of justice that is produced by it, come from nature of man."² This sounds like a paraphrase of Hazlitt's continuation of the essay on The People; "Where are we to

1. The Social Contract Part 2, Chap. 1.

2. Idem, Part 2, Chap. 2.

as even in his darkest bits of temper and despondency to hate mankind; and if he had he would surely not have expressed it in a marvellously enlightened defence of popular government. He was one of those who kept their eyes fixed on a cause that eclipsed himself--that cause was the cause of liberty. He saw the personalities of the reviewers and others as veiled bolts launched at the social interests for which he so manfully stood; he was the repre-



find the intellect of the people? Why, all the intellect that ever was is theirs. Public opinion expresses the collective sense of the whole people, and of all ages and nations. All that has ever been done for society has been done for it by this intellect, before it was cheapened to be a cat's paw of Divine Right!"¹

Yet Rousseau, who believed that there were certain conditions readily imaginable in which an aristocracy or a monarchy was preferable to a republic, who believed that "it is the best and most natural order that the wisest govern the multitude, if it is certain that the government will be for the benefit of the people,"² never went to quite the same lengths as Hazlitt.

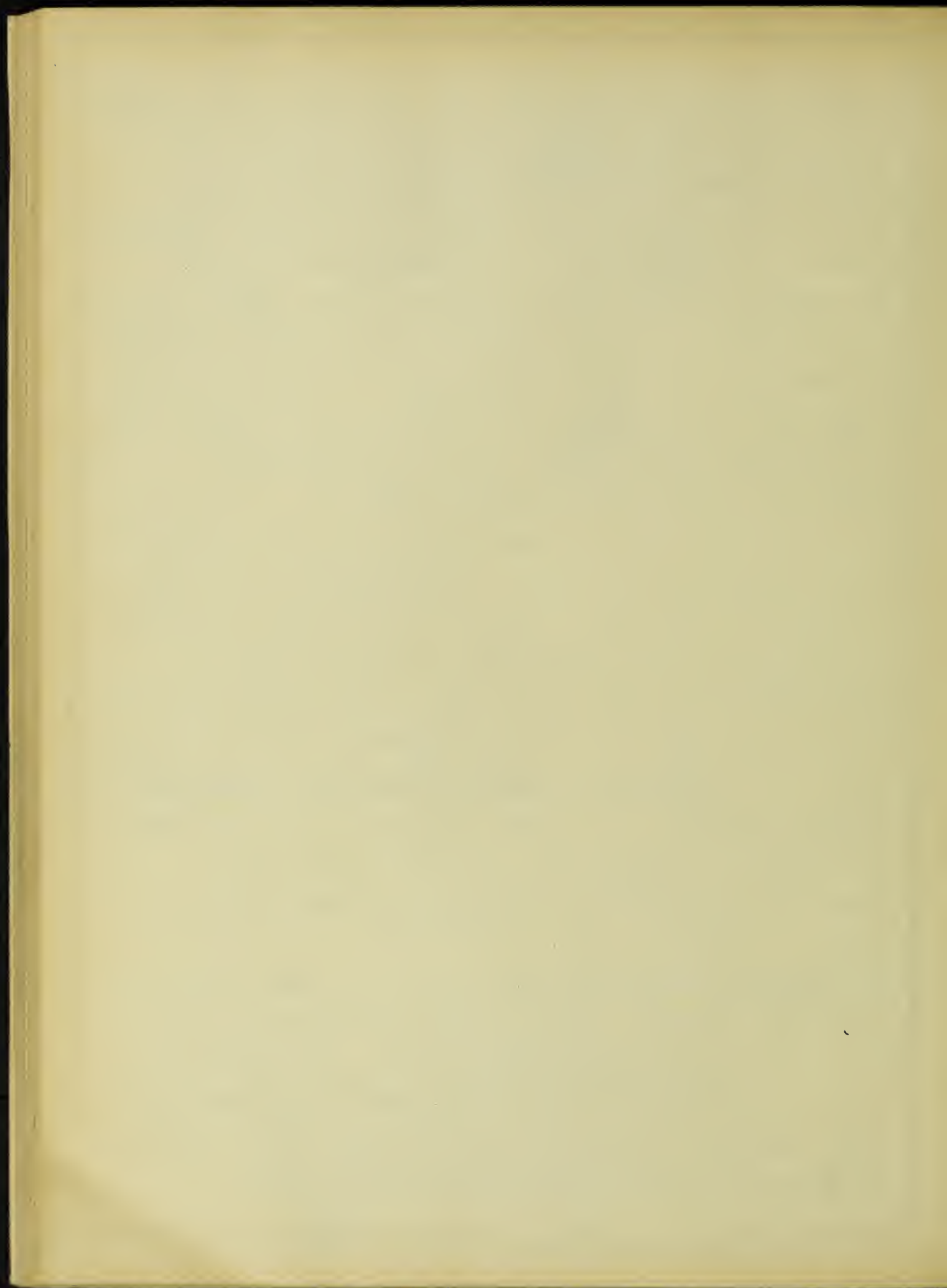
It is true that he had much of Hazlitt's faith in the sanity of the common's mind and temper. There is a passage in a letter to Voltaire, dated 1756, in which he directs all who differ with his political or social doctrines to the highest founts of wisdom--"Not to the rich, always weary of life and trembling lest they lose it, nor to men of letters, sedentary, feeble, and unhappy, but to des hommes de moyenne composition, formant le plus grand nombre, to the honest middle-class, preferably from beyond Paris, who have passed a life obscure and tranquil.

Hazlitt has translated this passage into his essay on the

1. What is the People? 3-293.

2. The Social Contract, Part 2.

representative of democracy and the opponent of legitimacy, and as such it was against him the tyrants struck. The scoundrel who tried to hold him up to infamy in "Mr. Hazlitt Cross-Questioned" aimed his shafts not at Hazlitt the author and divorced rake but at Hazlitt the defender of Northcote and popular rule.



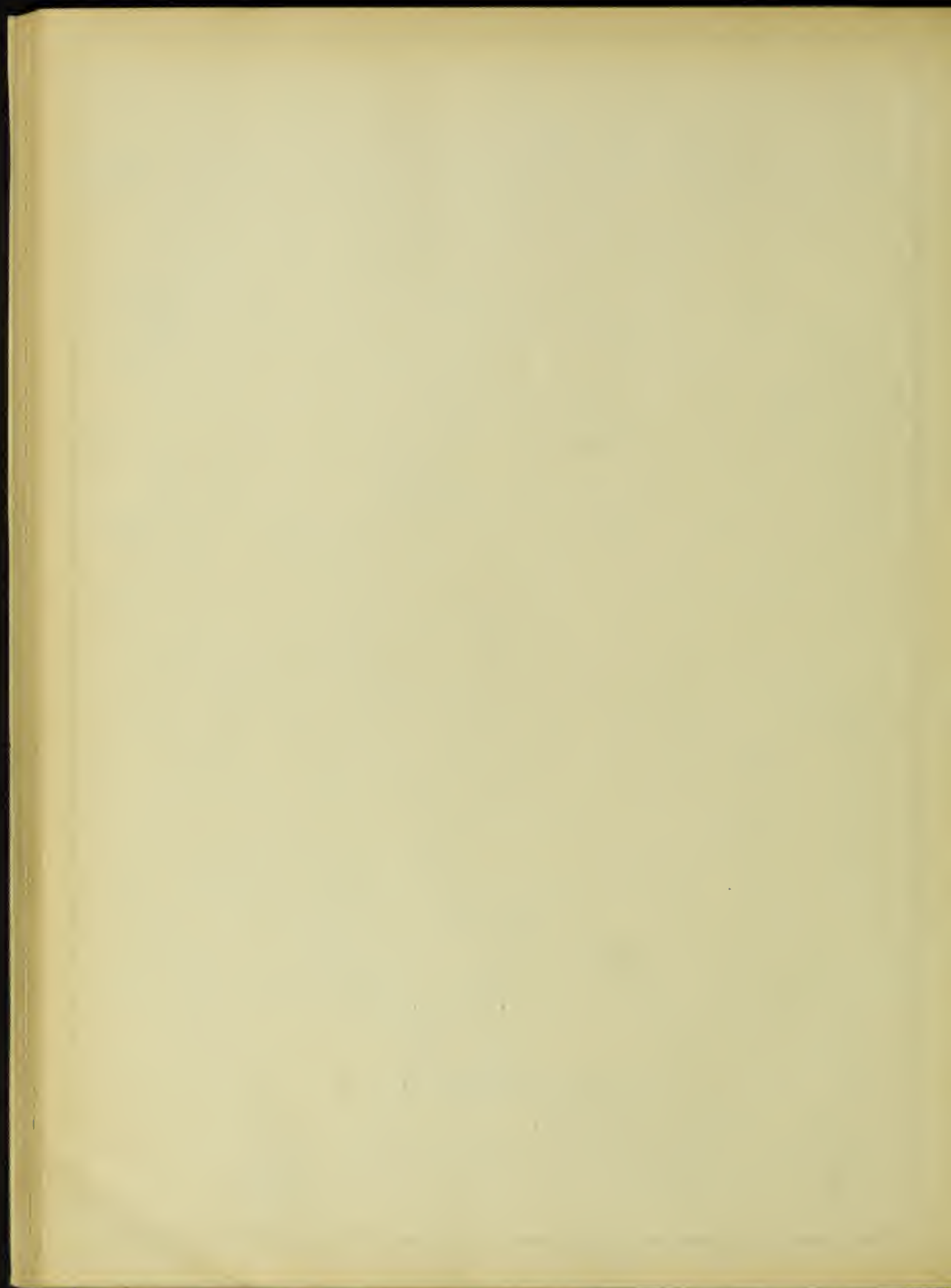
Ignorance of the Learned;¹ "You will hear more good things on the outside of a stage-coach from London to Oxford than if you were to pass a twelve-month with the heads of that famous university; and more home truths at a noisy debate in an ale-house than at a formal one in the House of Commons. The mass of society have common sense, and are in the right when they judge for themselves. The most sensible people to be met with in society are men of business and the world." It is equally true that ^{Rousseau} he tells us that to confuse royal government with that of a good king is wilful self-deception; that "to see what this government really is in itself it must be considered under incapable or wicked princes;" that the remedy for bad kings "is not endurance without murmuring, but actively to set about finding a good government."² But he had not Hazlitt's supreme faith that "no one individual is as wise as the whole people put together"³; the general will to him was an abstraction which his convictions did not incarnate in the population of any nation. He speaks of a 'sublime intelligence' that is above the grasp of the masses, of 'views and objects which are equally beyond the reach of the vulgar,' and of legislators who must 'lead without violence and persuade without convincing'⁴. Even allowing for the many literal contradictions in Rousseau's work, we must feel from the spirit behind it that he could never have written many of the sentences which Hazlitt inserted in his Characteristics: "Kings, who set up for Gods upon

1. Table Talk. 6-75

2. The Social Contract. Part 2, Chapter 5.

3. Life of Napoleon, Chap. 39.

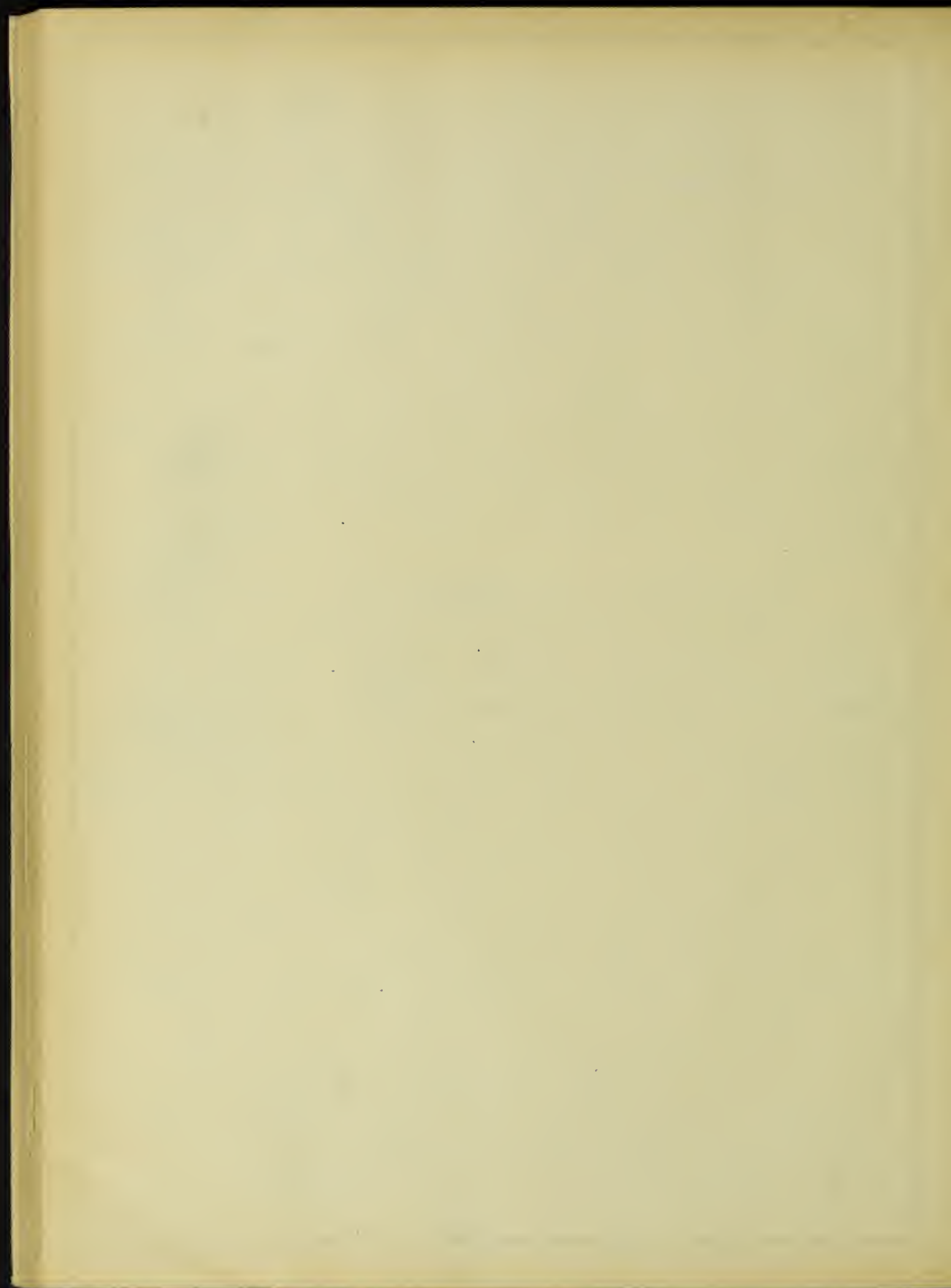
4. The Social Contract, Part 2, Chap. 7.



earth, should be treated as madmen, which one half of them, or as idiots, which the other half, really are".----"I would quarrel with the best friend I have rather ^{than} acknowledge the absolute right of the Bourbons." What they had in common was the intoxication of personal liberty, which they felt a possession too precious not to be shared with a ¹. They cry together, the one in his *Reveries*, the other in his *Complacées*, "O Liberty! what a mistress art thou! Have I not enjoyed thee as a bride and drunk thy spirit as of a wine cup, and will do so to my latest breath! But in the application of his ideals of liberty and equality Hazlitt--as befitted one who came a generation later--far outstripped Rousseau.

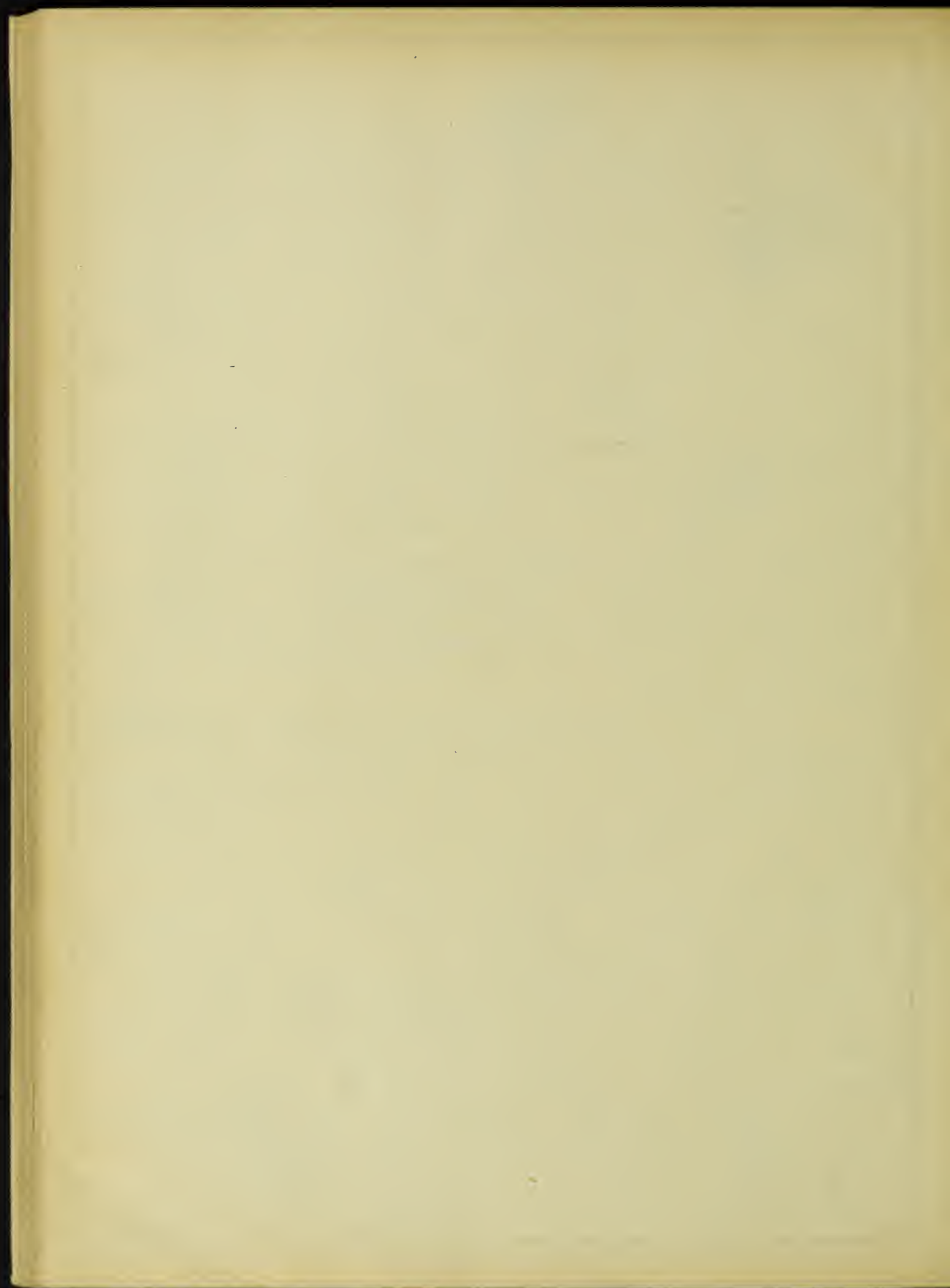
Hazlitt's English mind, moreover, built a more perfectly logical support for the doctrine of the efficiency of democratic government than was ever attempted by Rousseau. "Crowns", says Rousseau, "have been made hereditary in certain families; and an order of succession has been established in which, by substituting a regency for an election, an apparent tranquillity is preferred to a wise administration, and the risk of having a child, a monster, or an imbecile for a chief has been preferred to a contest over the choice of a good king. The fact that in exposing the nation to the risks of an alternative nearly all the chances are against it is not taken into consideration."¹ "A child, a monster, or an imbecile!--this has nearly the same ring as Hazlitt's phrase "madmen or idiots," Put, in the consideration of an elective kingship, the issue is not clearly drawn between democracy and tyranny; while nowhere does Rousseau insist upon the obvious silliness of hereditary kingship as does Hazlitt, rooted

1. The Social Contract, Part 3, Chapter 6.



in despair with the ruins of the revolution about him, and gazing at the vices of one George, the insanity of another. Rousseau ^{ly} contrasts on the dangers of succession with the merits of election; Hazlitt abhors it as a vital part of the monster of kingship, and as the seal of its claim to divine origin. His philosophy of government went deeper than Rousseau's, at the same time that it failed of its utmost force because of its definite application and journalistic expression. He would have struck at the root of the illogical theory of royal government, for he hated it with an intensity representing the utmost height of the revolutionary spirit of the age. As it is, his contemporaries ^{ar} Byron and Shelley represent the widest and deepest extension of the influence of Rousseau; but they had an incomparable advantage of expression which freed them from the necessity of attaching their attacks to some definite object.

It would be interesting to trace the growth of the revolutionary spirit in Hazlitt up to this radical phase which it reached in the last epoch of his life. It had at first a poetic cast, as in the other great souls of the time; for he felt a truly lyrical enthusiasm, in those days when he was most open to Rousseauistic influence, in seeing mankind enter upon the dream world of a political millennium, with all its fetters dissolved away in the magic light of truth, universal benevolence, and a common brotherhood, and the bright era opening in which justice should be done all by a government at last of, for, and by the people. He was a boy then, fresh from his walks with Wordsworth and Coleridge, painting in the Louvre, where "Genius and Fame dwelt together, and the shadow of Glory and of Liberty was seen

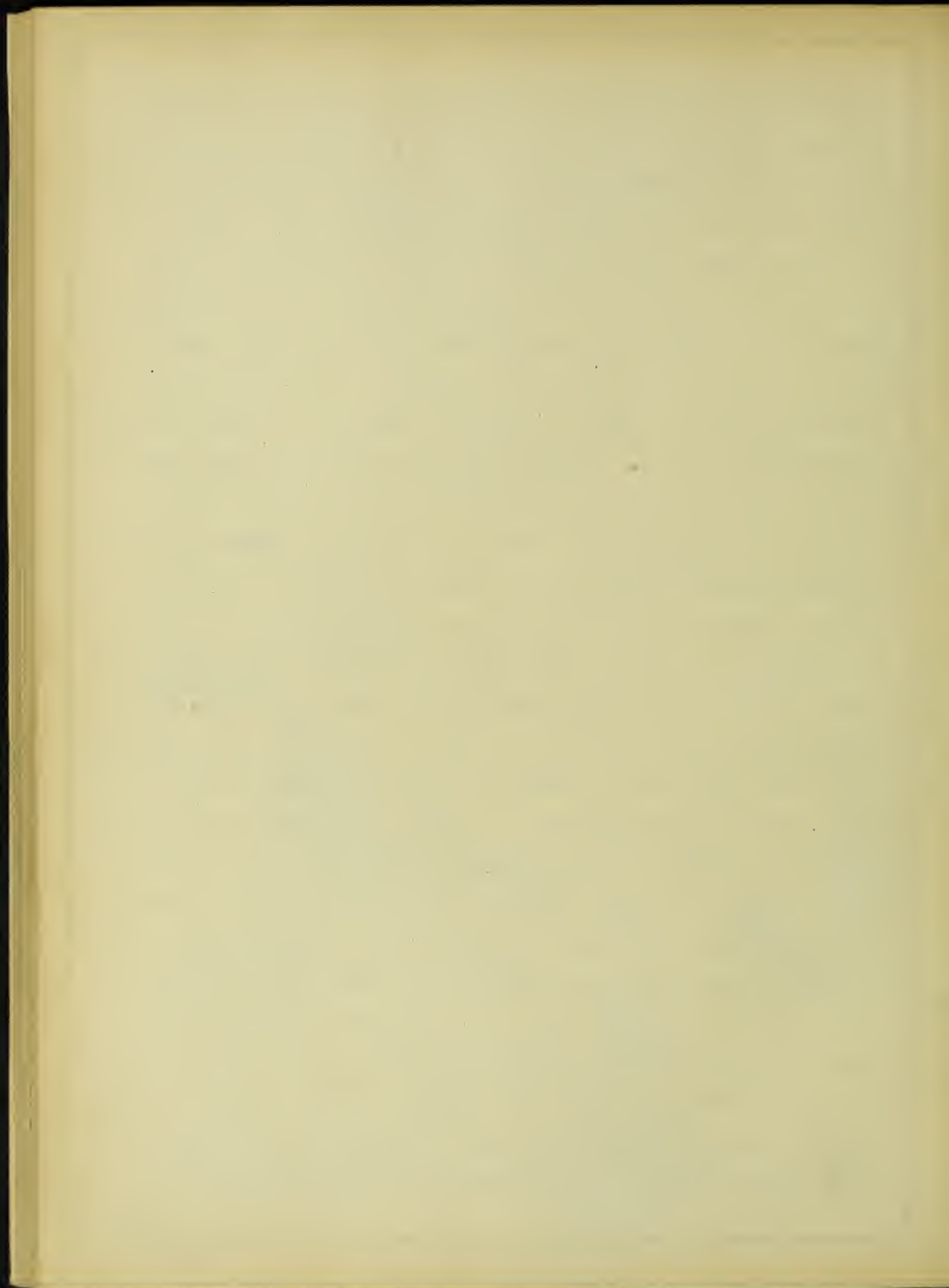


afar off." The Napoleonic wars robbed him of all compatriot supporters, ^{but} never for a moment did he swerve from the cause of which these buoyant moments were the pledge and crown; Waterloo dashed his final hopes, and when Southey in 1816 "Proudly raised the high thanksgiving strain, Of victory in a rightful cause achieved"¹ in which all true Britons joined, Hazlitt reached the extremity of his anger against tyranny, kings, and legitimacy. It is in this mood, lashed on by scurrilous reviewers in the service of the court, that he reaches heights of expression as far removed from anything to which Rousseau ever committed himself as did Danton and Marat. It is really only in his youthful epoch that we can get at the direct sway of the Frenchman who furnished new impulses to all Europe. Afterwards he is engaged too hotly in practical English controversy, and the world has swung too far along in its new orbit, to leave him in the semi-philosophical realm of the theorist. The primary impulse, whether communicated directly or coming in along the vibrant current of the times, might still be Rousseau's, as might also be the eloquence of his voice. The difficulty here is the same that is found in tracing the effect of Rousseau's discourses in forming the fervid convictions of the fathers of the American revolution--Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and Paine; for of the philosophical fundamentals and the emotional impetus a one may say anything with certainty be said.

In any event, the utterances of Hazlitt during his last years threw off their former restraint and moderation. "The tyrant," he said, "looks upon himself as a God, upon his vessel as

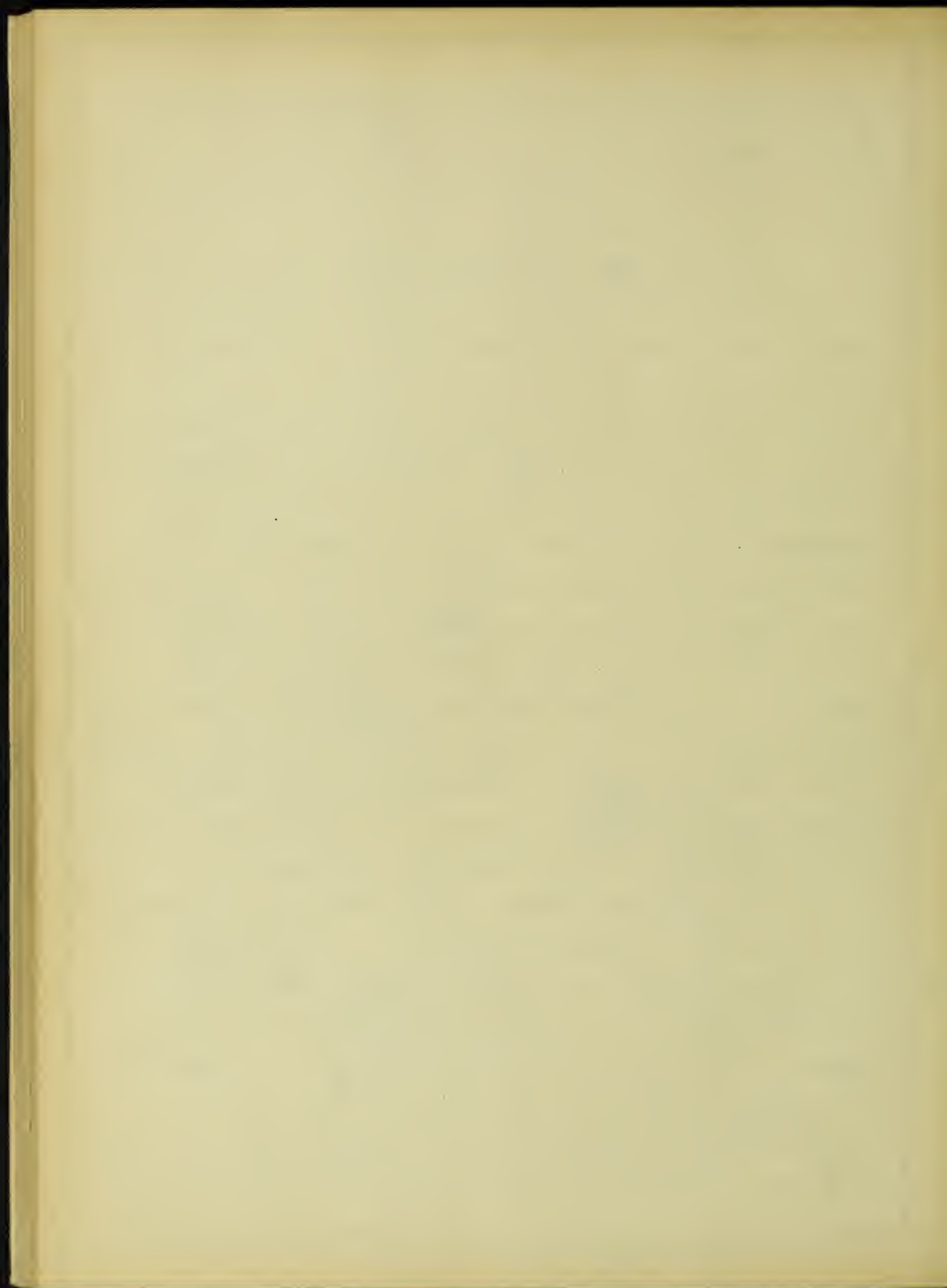
1. The Lay of the Laureate

a clod of the earth; while the philosopher looks upon them both as men, and instructs the world to do so." But his attitude is not that of the philosophical instructor. He quotes repeatedly the line concerning 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong'. He describes 'The Regal Character' for us. " The common regal character is the reverse of what it ought to be. When we see a poor creature like Ferdinand VII, who can hardly gabble out his words like a human being, more imbecile than a woman, more hypocritical than a priest, decked and dandled in the long robes and swaddling cloths^{of} Legitimacy, lullabied to rest with the dreams of superstition, drunk with the patriot blood of his country, and launching the thunders of his coward arm against the rising liberties of a New World, while he claims the style and title of Image of the Divinity, we may laugh or weep, but there is nothing to wonder at. Tyrants lose all respect for humanity in proportion as they are sunk beneath it; taught to believe^{themselves} of a different species, they really become so; lose their participation with their kind; and in mimicking the god, dwindle into the brute. Lined with prejudice as a fool, stung with truth as with scorpions, sore all over with wounded pride like a bull, their minds a heap of morbid proud flesh and bloated humors, a disease and gangrene in the state, instead of its life-blood and vital principle, despots claim mankind as their property. " This was his opinion of a king. Despite its underlying basis of truth, despite its concomitant apotheosis of suffering humanity, there is in such outbursts a desperate violence, a rabid lack of charity, and a frenzied unfairness that is almost distressing, and that faintly reminds us of the hallucinations of a mighty wrong,



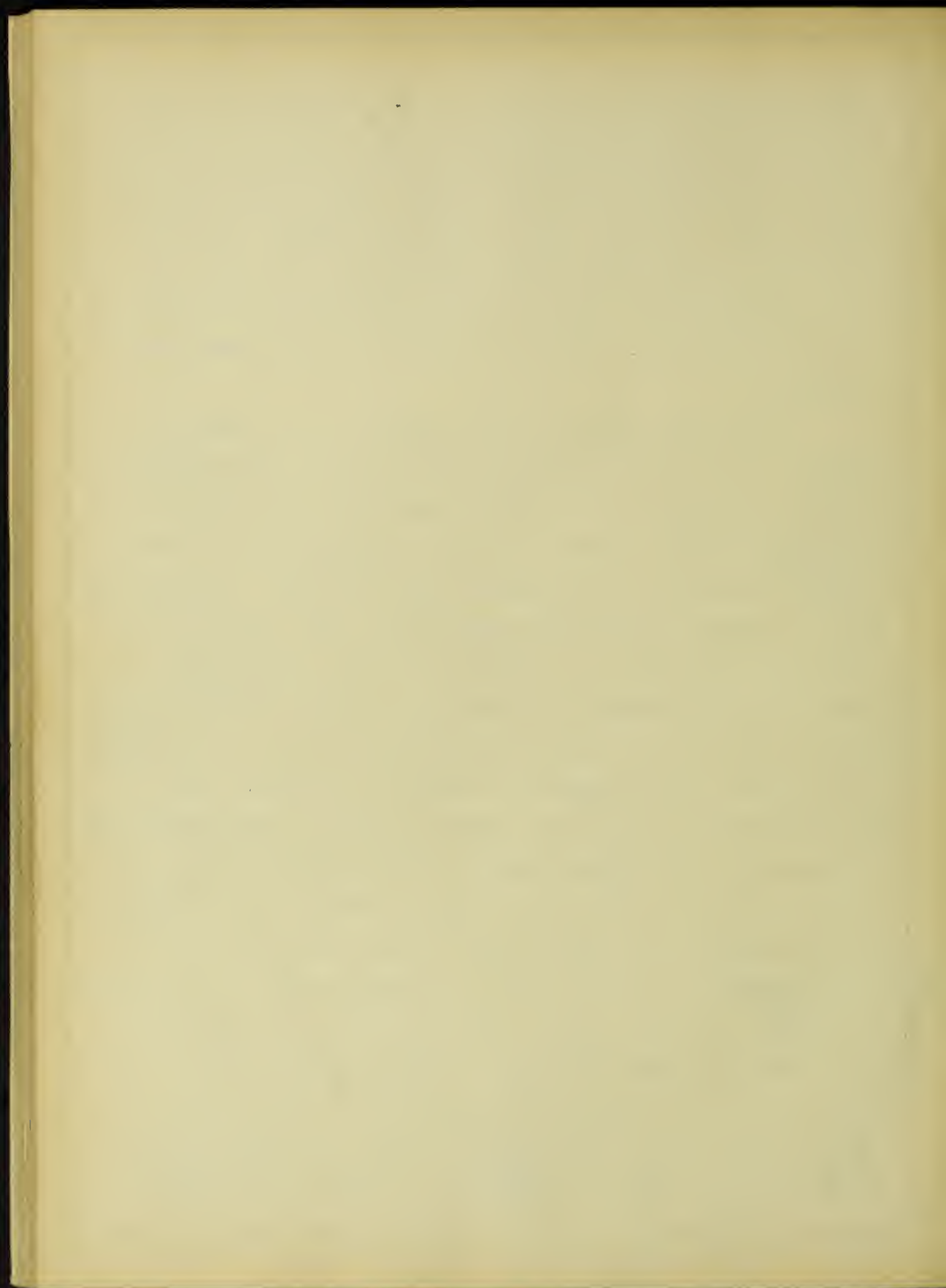
of the vividly anti-social passions that haunted the exiring mind of Rousseau.

It is here, at this theatrical crisis of his life and career, and this highest pitch to which his thought and feeling attained, where it came nearest a full harmony with the most potent of the Rousseauistic influences, that it is proper to leave Hazlitt. It would be possible for one careless of anti-climax to relate his disgust with the formalism, the hypocrisy, and the time-serving of the established church, in which "the form of religion had superseded the substance; the means had supplanted the end; and the sterling coin of charity and good works had been driven out of the currency for the base counterfeits of superstition and intolerance, by all the money changers and dealers in the temples established to religion throughout the world," to Rousseau's similar repudiation of Catholicism, and his simple appeal, in the creed of a Savoyard Priest to Conscience alone--"Conscience! ⁱⁿ Divine instinct, the mortal voice from heaven; sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God!" It would similarly be possible to establish the tenure by each of the doctrine of the desirability of national tranquillity, and the criminality of war, upon the same sentimental and economic formulae. But there is no longer any necessity for tracing back such resemblances to prove the existence of common feeling or borrowed ideas; and in Hazlitt at least these two articles of his creed were incidental and related exclusively to conditions both

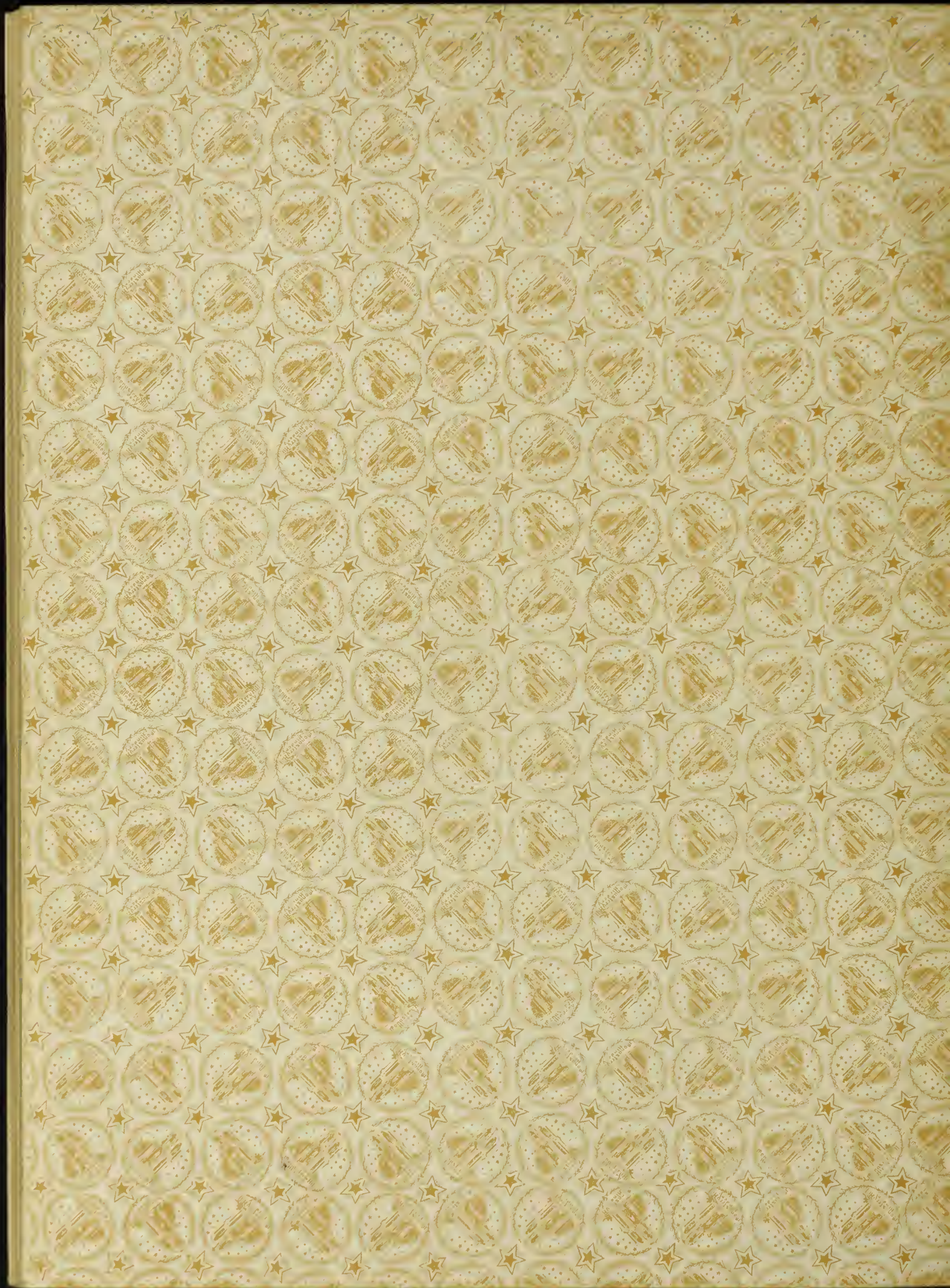


local and temporary, although it is far from impossible to put a road and permanent construction upon them. It is infinitely better to leave Hazlitt as a figure lianed against the dazzling blaze of the revolution, gigantic and heroic against its lurid blackness, the sword-like flames lighting up on his breast the star of allegiance to those principles which Rousseau had first sublimely enunciated. It is so he would have had himself always remembered.

It has been possible in the treatment of this theme to indicate something of the sublime fervor and the deeply poetic feeling of the writer; it has been impossible to do justice to his finely critical instinct, his entertainingly witty vein as an informal essayist, and his magnetic force of style. His acuteness, his enthusiasm, his soundness, made him the ideal expositor of a sentiment, delineator of a character or scene, narrator of a reminiscence, or analyst of a work of art. What is most striking of all, however, in a treatment that throws him into a comparison with Rousseau, is his rugged and searching sincerity. There is no rhodomontade in his finest passages, nothing of the overstrained or unnatural in his interpretation of the most exquisite and personal feelings, no falcity of logic in his most impassioned and interested pieces of reasoning. He never swerves, whether it is a matter of civic courage, of literary effect, or of personal convenience, from his faithful devotion to the shrine of truth; of the Rousseau whose vanity was an ever-betraying weakness, whose force of feeling repeatedly drew him into expressions from which he later had no choice but to recede, who admitted to his friends that his theories of education in *Emile* and his idylls of



the past in his discourses were conscious lies, and who wrote much for the mere effect desired by the speaker, we can make no such statement. We who grant that the Englishman was but a disciple of the greatest of all revolutionary personalities, must yet feel a pride in the fine Saxon fiber that restrained him from failing in anything which is measurable by the exact and unvarying standards of Earnestness and Verity.





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